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THE
CHRISTIAN LIFE

A
FIGHT OF FAITH.



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BY

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"What evangelical religion is, is told in two words; faith and charity, or belief and practice."—MILTON.

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PREFACE.

WHAT my motives have been in writing this work, I leave to be inferred from the work itself. For if they have not been as good as the work itself is, my professing that they have, will be of service to none; and if they have been better, yet will they not relieve the defects of unsuccessful execution. The truth, the approved reality of what is written, is that which concerns the reader. My defects of style and expression may be many, I have not sought to make them few; my concern has been to be duly impressed by the subject, and to follow the lead of it. In doing this, I have made much use of the

Scriptures, preferring to express myself in their words, to any of my own choosing ; not only as they have more authority, but more beauty, being words of life and devotion, words of truth and soberness, yet words set in the experience of saints.

H. H.

Philadelphia, March, 1848. J

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CHAPTER I.

PREVALENCE OF SENSE—ITS VARIOUS WORK-
INGS AS A FOE TO THE SPIRIT.

THE variations and shades of virtue in man, evince that his hold on it is most uncertain. There are visitings in his breast of almost every thing that is good. He has kindlings of sympathy, thoughts of the fair and beautiful, which indicate a capacity for something higher than he attains, and which yet expire often as things that are born to no end. He has love, gratitude, trust, hope, soul and sense, but the leveller of these all, is sense. The

great conflict of the world of mind which is to decide the glory of humanity, is that between sense and spirit. Which shall be the reigning power, is the question on which all depends at last. Which is the reigning power now, which is gaining most victories, is the question for us to decide from what we see and feel. What are the indications of prevailing sense in our own minds, and in society at large? What are we living for and living to? What does the heaving chest of humanity tell us on this subject? What is the speech of human sympathy which never deceives? A man fails in business, he is reduced from affluence to poverty, or he loses a limb, his sight or his hearing is taken away, and there is a general sympathy felt and expressed for him, and this is very well. These visible and sensible losses affect the general heart. But the inner, the spiritual man, decays before his time. He is destitute of all suitable provisions. He lives on without the senses of sight or hearing,

and is fast passing into a mere animal existence, and there is scarcely a thought of his misfortune, much less, any deep and general sympathy for it. In his condition there is nothing which touches the general heart. He is beheld only by the eyes of sense. In the eyes of faith he appears destitute of all things, and the most deluded and pitiable of all the creatures of God.

A plague or famine appears in some quarter of the globe, and public meetings are called, and liberal contributions are made to relieve the distressed ; cautionary measures are taken against like visitations, and the universal mind is moved with fear and compassion ; but at our very doors, and on every hand, multitudes may be dying with the plague of their hearts, or starving for want of the *bread of life*, of which we have enough and to spare, yea, whole races of men may be in this condition, and how impossible is it to raise a public stir about it ; how few mourn

over it, or even see any danger or distress of this kind? The body is visible; it is the seat of sense, and with that is our chief relationship of feeling.

Parents are counted fortunate and happy, whose children turn out well for this world. If they acquire wealth, influence, and station, congratulations are given on every hand, as if in these things consisted the sum of what is to be desired. To secure these ends their education is modeled. If they shine in worldly senses the parental heart is too apt to be satisfied, though they have no shining and no hope in any other. The prosperity, the consideration among men, which takes up their hearts, may be blinding them to God and heaven, and still, the heart of age rejoices in them as the pride of life. What can more truly show the supremacy of sense over Christian faith and affection? It makes every thing of this world, and nothing of eternity; every thing of self, and nothing of God; it makes

the interests of the body supreme, and treats man as if he had no soul to care for.

A poor and obscure man dies, and it is thought of little account. There is nothing that strikes the sense in the event ; but a rich man is taken away from the expensive and envied pleasures of life, and the eye of a city opens and its heart is moved. He is deprived of a visible enjoyment. He is taken from what the public eye and heart are set upon, and hence this pause in men's thoughts, and this crowd that gathers round. The world is a universe, and time and eternity, with its inhabitants. This is the disease of our hearts, the symptoms of which our every pulse tells.

Death is an event that strikes all minds with awe, yet it is well known that nothing can die of us but the body. What makes us men, what gives import to life, dies not nor can die ; yet it can continue a living agony ; it can be a dishonoured, disabled, enslaved thing, answering no fit uses, advancing in nothing

but misery, and ever sinking in its hopelessness, so that it had better be dead than living, dying and not able to die, and yet how few thoughts are fastened on the spectacle. The dying of the body is as the perishing of all vital interests, and these are the prized interests of mankind, so prized indeed, that they see not that man lives in spirit, or may live in a nobler sphere, where all is life and all may be joy. An enslaved, a dying life—a life of flesh and sense, is the one of our sympathies and hopes, such a life as brutes live, only less free, less joyous, less answerable to its end.

Men may peril their life for gain, they may brave the dangers of the battle-field, take any risk for temporal advantage ; and if they succeed, they shall be praised, and if they fail and perish in the conflict, they shall be honoured and remembered ; but let them take the same risks, or expend as much time and labor for the spiritual improvement of themselves or others, and if they succeed, few think them

wise or fortunate ; and if they perish in the good work, few remember their courage, but the many, if they give them a thought, do but pity their delusion. Zeal for spiritual things is being beside one's self, but zeal for sensible things is the highest wisdom. It is tameness to want zeal in a care for the body, but no tameness to sleep out the entire probation of the spirit. It is courage to brave sin and temptation, but to foresee evil and hide one's self, to take fright and run lest we be overcome of it, is the world's sign of cowardice. We may fall before it, be enslaved by it, carry its marks, and do only its bidding, and yet be accounted freemen. The freedom of a worldly mind is a slavery the more complete, the more satisfying it is. It is as a servant in a splendid livery, exhibiting only his master's glory, and vain at that.

We live in a world where every thing conspires to impress the spirit. This is the lesson of all objects, small and great. It is the teach-

ing of the seasons and the voice of the shining heavens above us. Every thing speaks to the soul. The change and age, the sickness, pain, and death of our life, night unto night, and day unto day uttering wisdom, call off our thoughts from the world, and beckon us "to look within the veil." We can see nothing, hear nothing, think nothing, that does not give us an *unworldly* counsel. All things declare the glory of God, and the declaration is to us his creatures. We have too the preaching of the word, God speaking in the voice of his ministers, repeating and enforcing His own will, giving us awaking messages of coming judgment, and messages of grace and love as bright and manifold as the beams of the sun. The Divine Spirit too moves upon the mass of universal mind, as upon the chaos of creation, to produce and keep order therein, yea, makes the word dispensed quick and powerful, so that it becomes a living word, charged with the "power and

wisdom of God unto salvation." So much is done that the expedients of Deity seem exhausted, and we hear a divine voice, as of one desponding at the prospect, saying, "what could I do unto my vineyard that I have not done?" "Oh Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? for your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away." Thus little are men impressed with things spiritual. The sound thereof is drowned in the din of sense. It has ever been so. The people of Israel led out of bondage by the visible shining of the Lord, conducted in safety through deep waters, sang "the Lord is our strength, he has become our salvation," and yet in three days murmured against Him because of bitter waters. They must be all the while indulged, they must have no crosses; have every thing to their liking, or they fretted as if they had never had a deliverance or heard of a God. The *young man* who came running to Jesus,

and kneeling down, said, "Good master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life," had some conviction of spiritual things, but he went away sorrowful when he got his question answered. His good impression passed away like the early dew. Felix and Agrippa were impressed—the one trembled, and the other was almost persuaded to be a Christian, but the concern did not last, and came to no good. Most men, at some time, have impressions of a similar kind, but they are seldom retained. If such impressions were not soon lost, if they were acted on as permanent impulses of life and duty, they would end in salvation. Impressive as the universe is, full of monition as life is, and we see not how it could be fuller, powerful and pervading as is the agency of the Spirit and word, the prevalence of sense is most manifest in the moods and drifts of the human mind. Nor can the insufficiency, the vanity of a world gained, check it. After trying every thing and suc-

ceeding to the best, yea at the very point where all worldly hopes seem to die in fruition, the cry of the heart is, "Who will show us any good?" Indeed men seem to be born with a world in their hearts, or they soon put one there; but it is a hollow world that fills not a single desire; yea, makes every desire a passion that is never satisfied with getting, so that, through all the emptiness of their experience, they pant after the dust of the earth as if there were no other good.

If we will attend to the course of men, of Christian men too, and see what their thoughts catch on in their unguarded moments when what the heart prizes will out, we shall see how sense and its interests reign. Find what makes them anxious, what causes their sorrow and discontent, what they envy, what their pride rests on, what sways them this or that way, and you will see so much of the workings of sense and self that you can hardly see any thing else.

The world is full of currents, and we are carried along with them. Hence we have warlike times, money-making times, pleasure-seeking times, and times other. These are master-swells of the human mind, and they seem to carry all before them. They are called, sometimes, characteristics of an age, and the thinking, feeling and acting of all men partake of them in some degree. This is seen in the character of the books, the men, and the works that are produced. They all have the same Cæsar's stamp. Thus we have successive waves of sense, raised up as by the storm-power "of the prince of the power of the air," and overcoming all the resistance we make to them. Looking on these, as so many generations of men, each seems like a swelling ocean on which there was never a spirit-calm. It is a heaving of the mind with sense. It is the great eye of humanity fixed with long gazing, and seeing but one object. If we will sound into these things, we shall see what it

is that makes us ; that it is not so much ourselves who think and act, but that we are merely creatures whose thinking and acting are done for us, and give us a growth in the measure of which we have little concern ; that there is a current which carries us along, but none which we stem and resist.

Reasoning and believing imply the action of spirit. They imply something unseen, and the process of finding it, as well as the faculty of prizing it, is supersensual, and of course, supernatural to creatures of so much sense as we are, and only so, for that reason. Spiritual or reasoning creatures must be greatly debased and turned out of their way, when the elemental processes of their being are uncongenial, and they become as birds without an instinct to use their wings, having indeed a heaven above them, which they have no delight to move in. So it is with us. A creeping, imitative existence will do for us. We shrink from the labor of thought, which

is the wing of faith. Objects which might mould us into something ethereal, or at least keep us from sinking into the sleep of sense, are every where inviting our notice, but they are scarcely recognized. Knowledge indeed is sought, but as a sensible gain or power, and not as the food of the spirit, not as strength in goodness, as all knowledge may and would be, if treasured with a spiritual taste. Intellectual pursuits may indicate the predominance of sense as much as the pursuit of any thing else. Indeed this is clearly their general character. The universal pride of knowledge and the uses we make of it show this. We do not see men bestowing care on the culture of their hearts, and yet the heart is as teachable as the mind, yea, capable of advances, which would astonish us more than any of mind ever did. But we have no eyes to see a glory of this kind, or the great uses to which we might turn it. Our minds are taken up with distinctions which must perish in a day, but the

distinction of goodness which all changes do but exalt, is the only one we see not.

Nothing about us ever exhibits such strength as the affections of the heart, yet sense and self can take them up and change them as very little things ; yea, may so transform us that we can see no beauty, and have no desire, which does not centre in ourselves ; so that we seem to lose sight of ourselves in ourselves. This is the only sensitive point we have, and yet we know it not. Miserably magnified self too often is, charging the best affections with a guile and selfishness which must end in misery or degradation. True affection flies from self to its object, and lives ever, because it is not a self-provider. It would, if it had full range in every breast, overmaster all evil and relieve all sorrow. But such is the reign of sense, that the affections are little better than calculations of selfishness, the weights and measures we use in the intercourse of life. If sense can thus storm and

spoil the heart, what will it not do ? Its manifestations are so like spirit, that we take them for an angel of light within us, when all the work it does, is but the work of our own flesh, a mortal and dying work, yet our best work. Love, which is spirit breathing, takes on the form of sense, and becomes material, earthly, self-providing ; less exalted, less patient, less sacrificing, than the instincts of unreasoning creatures. Such are the leveling, intruding, and all-conquering influences of sense. Nothing is so like spirit but sense may put it on. If it were not so, with so many objects worthy to be loved, life would be but a school of the heart. Living would carry us out of ourselves ; it would be the identification of the spirit with whatsoever is lovely and of good report. Affection is the transforming capacity of our nature. But even into this, sense so obtrudes as to absorb and characterize what we call the most spiritual exercises of our being.

The great struggles of life which absorb men's thoughts and labours, stand out as things for which we live, labeled with sense, and sense all over. We see little in these actings of our life that looks like stepping upward to something, seen through and shadowed forth in all things. The end of this life-strife is in its beginning, and is carried along in ourselves. The fruits of our successes and failures do but show this. They are pride, vanity, indulgence and display; or shame, despondency, envy and discontent; all forms of sense, and no spirit in them at all.

There are many things which betray the overgrowth of sense, which seldom strike our minds as giving signs of it. They are things that have no upward look, but a fixed stare on the ground, as if there were some enchantment there. Such is the secret vanity and pride of the heart, the wrinkled features of sense in age. We cherish these sentiments without any shame of them, and the thousands

that look on, think the better of us for them ; yet there is not a grace of the Spirit that they can live with, not a motion to any good in our breast, which must not contend against them. We cannot stir in faith, in repentance, or in love, without a conflict with these foes. They are as guards at the entrance of spiritual life, which we cannot pass without slaying. Slaying! that is too strong a term ; that we cannot do, but we must humble and cripple them, or perish. They will revive after all our blows. They will cleave to us, as that body of death of which St. Paul complained, but the consolation is, that it is a dying body, which we can carry in the strength of a better life, a life that is given unto victory.

The praise of our deeds is a charm which few hearts can resist ; seeking honour one from another is a thing which makes faith impossible, and yet these are refinements of sin which the conscience rarely reprove. They are counted upon as matters that are and

should be by the world, as motives that may be innocently indulged, and which it would be improvidence or stupidity to disregard; and yet there is no countenance in the word of God for the least feeling of the kind. They show, with all the force of crimes, that the heart is not given to Him, nor indeed can be, while this is one of its leading objects. This is clear, for all thoughts of this kind centre on self, and express only self, a polished self it may be, yet all the more vital and engrossing for that. These belong to a class called *spiritual sins*, not so designated because there is any spirit in them but that of evil. Spiritual sins are sins that come of sinning; they are the ripened fruit of evil, yet so common as seldom to be reproved or noticed. A due resistance of them would soon evince their power and subtlety. To live above these would require a conflict greater than the ruling of all our grosser passions. Any attempt to subdue them, so that they shall not enter into

our motives, or mar the beauty of our actions, would convince us at once of our weakness and vileness. Lust is crime, and hatred murder, and so it is of a thousand other evil thoughts, which come and go with us as friendly visitants. We detect not their character, but if we did, and ranked ourselves according to the scriptural rule, it would be impossible for us to be self-complacent, unless in what should be our shame, and is our crime.

The workings of sense, presented in these several examples, show that it is a master-workman in our nature. Its presence is seen in the best of men, blasting the good they would do, and marring the beauty of all human goodness. They exhibit a view of our spiritual state, which shows that living godly, is but dying to ourselves, and dying to the world; that the Christian life is a *fight of faith*, in which there must be the "crucifixion of the natural man;" that as Christ died for sin, the painful death of the cross, so we must

die unto sin, the painful death of crossing our nature and living above it. We have no adequate conception of the Christian's life, if we see not in it, at every step, difficulty and conflict. Godly living is supernatural. It is a life "hid with Christ in God," and its outward and visible manifestation is a reproof of the world, by a resistance and contrast to its practice, its morals, its entire economy. Hence the words, "Ye are the light of the world, the salt of the earth," "Epistles known and read of all men." A Christian life is a living teacher of all the precepts of the divine law—so far as it does not reprove as that does, and act as that requires, it is a life of transgression, of indulgence to self, of treason to its Lord. Truth, or law, is given unto practice, and practice is the working of its power. It is unmeaning, except in regard to practice.

To be fallen; to be in a state calling for change and improvement; to commence a life counter to one we are living, and have long

lived, are ideas that imply essential difficulty and conflict. It is a life to be maintained against a life-resistance, a warring of the spirit against the flesh ; and to live so as not to see and feel this, is not life, it is death, and the blinding passions of a worldly heart are like strong men carrying us out to the grave.

There is no meaning in Christianity short of its requiring that we should find in it something more worthy to live for than ourselves, or the world. It is a remedy of an evil and unsatisfying state, and we must find it such, or we know nothing of it as it may be known. It is idle that a rest should be proposed to us as something to live for, if we may not gain tastes of it, and a fitness for it, which shall make it the chief good, a good the hope and joy of which shall more than compensate for what we can sacrifice in its attainment. It is not intended that our service should be a bondage, but a liberty, a perfect freedom, and we should find it so, if the whole heart was in

it. It is a divided heart, a divided service, which makes us slaves, and takes from our love, our faith, and hope, the sense of power and victory. We may too be so much under the dominion of sense, of worldly affections; these may be so much *all* that we are, that we may live in them without any feeling of incongruity. This is a captivity to sin so complete that we lose the sense of it. This is the reason many are so much at ease, and yet know nothing of any conflict with sense and the world. This thought strikes at the seat of the peace which characterizes our Christian course. We do not resist our spiritual foes enough to try their power and number, and of course, we know little of the confidence and strength of faith and love. Our life is thus a fight of conscience, an unrest in hope, or it is a peace in deadened feeling, a rest in delusion. The true peace of God comes of victory through faith over the flesh, the world, and the devil.

It is the repose after conflict, the sense of safety after dangers gone through, the pledge that the arm on which we lean is almighty, and will never withdraw its support from us. It is a lively peace, a trusting, acting peace, a jealous, out-looking and self-conquering peace, such as the world gives not, and will vainly attempt to take away. No peace of this kind was ever attained without a contest ; it implies a victory out of weakness over enemies, too powerful for our unaided strength. It is as different as possible from a dead or worldly repose, and springs from directly opposite causes. The one is the peace of victors, the other of captives.

No view we can take of the Christian life, makes it anything but one of incessant conflict. It is a progressive life, and not an advance is gained but against opposing powers, within and without. It is a life against a life which has the start of it, and will have the mastery over it, whenever we are left to take

the way of our choice. We see with what powers and variations of sense it has to contend. There is no point at which this enemy is not met, no exercise of the soul into which it may not intrude, and conceal its lodgment there. If we were to consider our foes, each by itself, and trace each in all the forms and modifications of its action, legions of devils should not alarm us more.

To exhibit the field of the heart, and the armies quartered there, would exhaust the sum of what is to be known of man. It would bring the powers of two worlds into view. Good and evil, in all their range of conflict, would be seen in array. Every inch of this field, every ray of light that strikes on it, would reveal the fight between sense and spirit. That we do not now see it, and hear the clashing of arms, shows that we have not the eye or ear to take the warning.

The ways are innumerable in which we might prove the prevalence of sense and its

direct contrariety to spiritual life. All the marks of the Spirit's teaching show this, and all the recorded experience of holy men confirms it. "I delight," says an apostle, "in the law of God after the inward man," but this the natural, outward, worldly man never does. David says, "My soul breaketh for the longing it hath unto thy judgments at all times." Here is a wonderful urgency and bursting out of a taste that contrasts as wonderfully with the love and experience good men generally attain to. He magnifies the theme: "O, how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day." "Thy testimonies are my delight and my counsellors." "The law of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver." "Thy word is very pure, therefore thy servant loveth it." "Thy words are sweeter to my mouth than honey and the honey-comb." "I hate vain thoughts, but thy law do I love." There was no doubt of his taste, it was the engrossing

reality of his spirit, and unlike anything naturally experienced. Job also says, "I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food." There was nothing like it in his estimation, nothing so sweet, so essential. So, we might go on and show, it was with prophets and apostles; and if it were so with us, we should get a wisdom and understanding from the word of God that would break all the power of sense, and show forth our profiting to all men; our experience would be as a continual sweetness, our sorrows would turn into triumphs, and our dying would be as the blazing up of our spirits into heaven.

But this sweet taste in the law of the Lord is not more unlike the workings of sense, than was the bitter taste of sin, which these holy men everywhere express. "I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." "My comeliness within me is turned into corruption." "O God, thou knowest my foolishness, and my sins are not hidden from thee." "Purge

me with hyssop, and I shall be clean ; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.” “ My iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up ; they are more than the hairs of my head ; therefore my heart faileth me. O Lord, make haste to help me.” “ When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. I said I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord , and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.” “ When I would do good, evil is present with me.” “ There is a law in my members warring against the law of my mind.” “ O wretched man that I am ! who shall deliver me.” These and similar sentiments are breaking forth from the experience of inspired men in every part of God’s word, and they are as different as anything can be from the perceptions of the natural mind, which is “ enmity against God, and is not subject to his law, neither indeed can be.”

The joy of the Lord in the experience of

saints is wonderful. It fills the soul. It makes them glory in tribulations, in anything that works patience in them. It causes them to "count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ." "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice." "Thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance." "My soul shall make her boast in the Lord." "Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, ye righteous; and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart." No such delight in the word of the Lord, no such abhorrence of sin, no such holy joy, is at all consistent with the dominion of sense in the mind. They are sentiments that can be understood only by a spiritual mind. They imply the death of sense and the life of God in the soul. The joy and sweetness of this life are a mystery to the inexperienced. We may reason about them and not understand, but when we hear holy men cry out for joy, "O taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man that

trusteth in him," "O fear the Lord, for there is no want to them that fear him," "They that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing," we must conclude there is a capacity of Christian trust and joy which we have not attained, and that sense in some of its forms is the cause of it.

So long as sense is the ruling power of our mind, we cannot rise to the experience of a spiritual being. They are of an opposite nature, and ever war against each other. But what is natural to us feeds sense, what self seeks feeds it, the flatteries, smiles and treasures of the world feed it, and it gains a great growth even when we little heed it. It would, indeed, seem, if we gave any thought to it, that we can never wonder at our low experience in spiritual things, unless we are conscious of a continued resistance to this enemy, and yet it is easy for us to indulge it, live in its moods, and be under its power, without a thought that it is so. An enemy hath done this great

evil to our soul, and we know it not. We must look to the neglect of the requirements made upon our spirits, for our want of joy in the Holy Ghost.

If we look closely to the interests of our soul, at what a poor rate shall we find ourselves living? Every onset of sense surprises us, and carries us into fault, so that, on all occasions that try what spirit we are of, we are found to be too much as men of the world. Lookers-on say so, and with great reason. This is shown in all the ways and forms of seeking *our own things*, and not the things of the Spirit. Take any one of the leading requirements on our spirits, and if we lived up to it fully, it would mark and single us out among men. It would do more: it would give us new power against all our spiritual foes, and carry us on to obey all the Divine precepts. They all run into each other; all are beams of one and the same light. Entering into one precept, and knowing it by a

complying taste, is such an earnest of life and truth as will make us strong in the Lord. It will prove a discerning light in the spirit, guiding and inviting us on through the whole range of duty.

Take, for illustration, the precept, "Avenge not yourselves; but rather give place unto wrath." "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you." Complying with this duty would cross every motion of the natural heart, and make us what the end of the passage declares—*the children of our Father which is in heaven*.

But we are so far from complying with this precept that all men seem to have lost sight of its beauty and dignity, so much so, that if we resent not wrong, or regret that we have done so, it is accounted tame and cowardly. Compliance with this one precept, under injuries to the full extent of its demand, would

fix the gaze of a wondering world on us, and show that men see not, nor can see, spiritual beauties. This remark applies to the great majority of professing Christians, if we may judge of them from their conduct under provocations, and their speech concerning those who resent not injuries. Now and then, we see some such gentle and meek spirits, but they are little admired, and seldom chosen as companions. They are not liked the better, or trusted the more for this virtue; still this is one of the most difficult and bravest of human virtues. It is God-like, and not man-like.

The command not to covet, not “to lay up treasure on the earth, but to seek those treasures which are in heaven,” we must comply with as a first condition of our spiritual improvement. To obey it altogether would evince the perfection of the spirit, and yet we may disobey it in all the more elegant forms of loving the world and ourselves supremely,

and none will wonder at us or see that our beauty is marred at all ; but so to resist the world, so to neglect provisions for self, as to be wanting in an ordinary care for these things, and there are none who will think us exactly sane. The virtue which we have in this respect, so far from being envied, will be thought an infirmity or fault. There is no spiritual grace that does or can appear great and lovely, except in spiritual eyes, and *our* eyes spiritual are apt to be so dimmed with sense, that we see not the full beauty of a “conversation such as becometh the gospel of Christ.” Such a *conversation* will reprove the world at every point of contact ; and will appear singular where all come so far short of it.

If we were to see men so much more attached to spiritual things, and so much more zealous in the pursuit of them, as those things are better and more valuable than worldly things, the sight would be the talk of all be-

holders. But how wise and happy would it be for us if it were so? We should no longer be taking things only by the hearing of the ear; we should taste by faith the powers of the world to come; the hope of heaven would be enthroned in our souls, and its temper would glow in our hearts; displacing the world from our regards, eclipsing the glory of all sensible objects, and absorbing the whole mind in love to God. We should have no need to be assured of our blessedness, we should feel it; no need of a carnal dying, for death would be swallowed up in life; no need of any to tell us this is the way, the truth, and the life, for "Christ would be in us the hope of glory," and the substance of life and truth. The world in all it can give us, is but an instrument of enjoyment, a vessel that may be broken in a moment, a cup whose sweetness depends on our taste, but here is a happiness that no events can frustrate; it is an element of our being, or rather it is our

being itself. Living thus is but the acting of joy ; it is life, full, ineffable life. So much better is the " substance " the spirit gains, than that of sense ! So much is the world and sense reproved by the full realization of any one spiritual hope or grace !

The pleasures of sense, let them take what form they will, refine them as much as we may, till they run into a devotion for art and music, have still no power to satisfy the mind or tranquilize the heart. They enlarge the desires they gratify, and inflame the passions they indulge. They have no contact with the soul, no power to calm the conscience, no comfort to give in death. They cannot purify the affections, or let in the light of hope from eternity. At best, they must leave the mind exposed to the terror of losing all things. But spiritual enjoyments give light, and purity, and peace. " The good man is satisfied from himself ; " he " inherits all things." Spiritual riches are a part of ourselves ; they are ours,

not as the world is ours. That is not ours even in the little we possess of it, for at our parting we must leave it all, and be as destitute as if we had never called it our own. Our moral state, our spiritual man is untouched and unprofited by these gross realities, but spiritual riches enter into "the hidden man," and there is no time of parting with them. We die into them, not from them. We wake up in them to find them ours, not to see that they are gone. There is no loss and no regret in them, but the joy of all else, if it be a chief joy, reduces itself at last to sorrow and regret.

How certain is the conflict between the interests and agency of sense and spirit! How vain is it to expect in such a world, and with such hearts as ours, to realize the sweetness, the transforming power of Christian hope, without a continual "fight of faith!" Things spiritual never change, and the Christian spirit is in all conditions and times the same. There is one essential and never-varying feature of

character which we must have, if we are true disciples, and that is *spirituality*. To obtain this we must “resist the course of this world;” we must not be of it whilst in it. We must not seek our happiness or distinction in the way of it. We must not be entangled in its affairs and sorrows. “We must lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and run with patience the race that is set before us.” This is an apostle’s resolve. He introduces it, alluding to “the great cloud of witnesses,” meaning the faithful in all past time, who had so run and so obtained. They trampled the world under their feet, declined its riches and honors as so many weights or hindrances, resisted its pleasures and customs as so many enticements to evil; and so are we advised to do, to run from it, leaving off our habits of sinning, our besetting sins, and running the “race that is set before us,”—doing “this one thing,” as if nothing else could be or was worthy to be done.

I have thus given but glimpses of the power and transmutations of sense, but they are such as fall within our experience ; and they evince the necessity of a continual watchfulness and resistance on our part, if we would have the “ peace of God dwell in our hearts richly.” But this is but one and a partial view of our spiritual conflict. The enemies we have to contend with are many, and their forms of operation many.

CHAPTER II.

SEPARATE CONSIDERATION OF SOME OF THE
FOES OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE.

It seems to be a law of our nature and of Providence, that the efforts necessary to accomplish all great and good ends, are necessary also to the health and perfection of our intellectual and moral powers. This is in a peculiar sense true with respect to the rewards of religion. They are the gracious rewards of suffering, self-denial, and incessant labor, but the sacrifices and duties of which they are the rewards, are all important parts of that moral training to which our best welfare would require us to be subjected even if it were not attended by such rewards. We may easily expose ourselves to the evils of disgrace or poverty, but to acquire the advantages of

wealth or of a good reputation, we must practice great self-denial. We may go to perdition without making an effort. We may sleep on our way, the current of our nature will safely and silently bear us there ; but if we would go to heaven, we must engage in a warfare where effort, anxious, painful and resolute, must be the order of each day, until our feet stand on Mount Zion, our redemption be completed, and our soul eternally safe in the New Jerusalem.

On such a subject as this, the speculations of reason concern us little. I will endeavor to present the results of the Christian's experience, and the instructions of the word of God in respect to this warfare. What holy men have always experienced, what God declares is law, should be the rule of our judgment as well as of our practice. We are told that *the righteous are scarcely saved*, and the inference is drawn from it, *where shall the ungodly and sinner appear?* Heralds are sent to us,

and they are “to lift up their voice like a trumpet,” *to cry aloud and spare not*. The danger then is great, and such as we are not likely to be aware of. It is in ourselves, and we see it not. “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.” “In many things we offend all. There is no one that doeth good and sinneth not, but all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.” Here is the contest ; it is doing good and doing evil by the best of saints. This being our case, it is evident we must contest it at every step of our progress, if good is to gain the mastery in us, and become the “law of our minds.” “The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.” “Strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it. Strive to enter in at the strait gate ; for many shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able.” These cautions are very expressive, and intimate opposition of various

kinds. They describe life as a *strait passage*, beset with enemies, whom we must encounter and overcome, before we can pass through. We are exposed to many difficulties arising from the nature and extent of the divine commands, from the devil, from the corruption of our own hearts, from the character of our associates, and from our different and changing conditions in life.

1. "This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments." His law is holy, just, and good, and cannot be obeyed without making it the law of our hearts, and giving to it *all diligence*. His commandments too are *exceeding broad*, comprising a great variety and exactness of duty to God, our neighbor, and ourselves, and thus exacting from us a continual thoughtfulness. They are also of a sublime and holy nature, requiring not only that we should cultivate certain virtues, but that we should not rest without the perfection of them. We are to love God with all our

heart, and soul, and strength, and our neighbor as ourselves ; we are to do this not for an hour or a day, but continually to the end of our lives. If we try ourselves by this rule, or try to conform to it, we shall see how far short of it we come, and how great and difficult is the calling we have.

Now if we add to this, a sense of our defective obedience, a consideration of our indwelling sin, and of the temptations of Satan, of the world, and of our companions, with their ten thousand ways of diverting our minds and beguiling us from the path of duty ; we must see that if we have not difficulty and conflict, it is because we have surrendered to our enemies and ceased from the fight.

But the half has not been told us, nor hath it entered into our hearts to consider the full danger and difficulty of the conflict of the Christian, in which he endeavors after the victory of holiness and grace. It is a personal, secret, and spiritual conflict, in which

he is observed by the "Captain of his salvation" alone. The enemies to be encountered are spiritual. The weapons to be employed against them, and the strength in which they are to be used, are also spiritual and holy. All the powers and faculties of the soul as renewed and sanctified by the grace of God, are put in high, anxious, and energetic requisition. Thought, feeling, conscience, reason, will, hope, fear, joy, sorrow, holy determination and action ; these and all other sentiments and capacities are in array and under solemn command, and must fight and conquer, or fall and perish. The only condition of the contest is this,—if the Christian surrenders to his foes he shall find no quarter ; if he holds out and faints not, he shall subdue them.

2. Let us go on, and see what we may of the enemies battling against the soul. Let us see what mark and name they bear, that we may find them out and guard against them.

The world is a foe to the grace of God,

which must be resisted and overcome. We have already seen what claims it sets up, and what a hold it is apt to gain on the heart. But we have not seen all, and we never shall see all, till we enter upon a resistance which will prove its strength and our weakness. Nothing around the Christian here is friendly to him or his interests as the child of God. The men of the world, the spirit of the world, the habits, modes, principles, practices and fashions of the world; the business, temptations, pleasures, honours, and even cares and sorrows of the world, are all unfavourable to his pursuit of eternal life. Combined, they make a stout and fearful foe. To each alone, or to all in one, he must be at enmity so long as they are opposed to holiness of heart and life. "The things of the world," comprehending every object and motive which may delude, cheat, and "drown men in destruction and perdition"—over these, and their name is legion, he is to gain and keep the mastery.

Every day of his life is to be marked by such efforts and preparations as become a state of warfare with such enemies. He must not give an inch of ground ; he must not go hand in hand with any one of them, for "the friendship of the world is enmity with God ;" and "we cannot serve two masters, for either we will hate the one and love the other, or else we will hold to the one and despise the other."

We must then yield nothing to this enemy. It is one to be resisted in every form it takes, and its forms are often fair. The least that we concede to it, will only strengthen its claims and encourage new attacks. If we trifle in little things, and give way in slight conformities, we shall find it an enemy that will never spare, or be satisfied short of our full surrender. All our concessions will result as strength to it and weakness to us.

It is a delicate, a great work to resist an enemy who approaches us often only with proffers of friendship, and courts us with re-

spect, yet its necessity would never be out of mind, if we remembered that all our time is misspent which is not given to the care of our souls.

This is a noiseless conflict, but great and pervading powers are engaged in it. The command is given, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." We must overcome. To this end we were sent into the world, and failing of it, it were better not to have been born. Fix this thought in mind, so that it shall never escape, that without victory there is no salvation. Stopping short of this, is losing all things. We may fight on, and fight well, but if we endure only for a season, and then fall away, it is like beginning to build and not being able to finish; all that we have done comes to nought. *We are then only made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end.* We must endure as "good soldiers of the cross," and endure unto the

end, and then will our warfare be found to issue in glory at the appearance of Jesus Christ.

What does the world do but live at large after the desires of the flesh and the mind? The import of the best life, spent according to the principles and "course of this world," is spoken out in the words, "We will not have this man to rule over us." Surely we must lead a life altogether different; we must so "put on the Lord Jesus Christ" that it shall appear that "He is formed in our hearts the hope of glory." It is only as we sow to the spirit now, that we can hope to reap in due season, if we faint not. "To him that overcometh will I give to sit on my throne." He shall sit with me and with the faithful victors of all ages, and shall enjoy an eternal repose; he shall look on the seed sown in life, on trials and conflicts ended, and forward to the harvest, to all the good that eternity can gather up and save from improved time. This will

be a great deep of thought in which we shall lose ourselves, and delight to be lost forever. But the memory of the great things gained by devotion to the world will perish, or live only as a memento of their insignificance and our folly.

We may learn further what a trial is due resistance to the world, by considering the example of our Saviour. In his estimation of temporal advantages, He is to be imitated by us. He had all the sympathies and affections natural to us ; and it was an important part of his mission into this world to set us an example of proper carriage in it. It was an example of humanity which we may and should conform to. He used no super-human powers in resisting the world, in declining its honours, and turning his eyes away from all its blandishments.

He obeyed God in the world as a man ; fulfilling all righteousness. He could not err in his estimate of anything here. He saw no

greatness but that which likens man to his Maker. He did not decline the business of life, but he found nothing, and adopted nothing here, as the rest and portion of the mind. He sought no great things. He subjected himself to fatigue, to infirmity and want. He relaxed not his labours of love, though he often spent his strength “for nought, and in vain.” We have no temptations, and are placed in no circumstances, which he did not pass through. In all the varying scenes of our mortal conflict—in public and in solitude, in affliction and in distress, we see him going before us for our imitation. If anything can eclipse the glory of the world, it is the excelling brightness of his example; if anything can bring down its honours to a level with things we may tread upon, it is his declining them; if anything can engage our resistance to it in every vain and sinful form, and make us burn with the desire of victory over it, it is the knowledge and love of Him.

3. There is another adversary with which the Christian has to contend, even more powerful, but, it is to be feared, less considered than any other. There is enough, however, made of this enemy in the Scriptures to justify a separate and careful consideration of him. This foe is the devil. A belief in the existence and agency of this evil spirit has distinguished every age of Christianity. It has not only been a doctrine of the Church, but as little questioned as any of the leading truths of revelation. Nor is it an unimportant doctrine. It is often alluded to by our Saviour and his apostles as one of great moment. It seems to have entered largely into the plan of redemption, as we read, "For this cause the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil." He is often represented as having a kingdom, and angels, and subjects, all opposed to the kingdom of Christ. He also instituted and conducted a distinguished part of our Saviour's trial on

earth, and his malignant activity against his followers is a frequent theme of warning to them. "Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour, whom resist steadfast." What language could be more expressive or more worthy of our heed? "Stand against the wiles of the devil." "Ye wrestle against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world," by which the apostle appears to mean those various orders of intelligences who once dwelt in heaven, but who, by their mighty and now perverted powers and capacities, are most fearful promoters and fomenters of sin and crime among men, seeking to entice, and where they cannot entice, to assault and thus overcome and destroy the very people of God.

The devil is often styled "the god of this world," and his agents are represented as "the rulers of the darkness of this world."

His work is manifested in blinding the judgment of men, and effacing all spirituality from their minds. How much of the degradation, crime and sensuality of our race is owing to his influence none can say, but there seems no more rational way of accounting for them.

In all temptation to disobey God, there seems to be also a measure of satanic influence. When Judas betrayed our Saviour, Satan is said to have entered his heart. When Ananias deceived in keeping back part of the money of the Lord, "why," said Peter, "hath Satan filled thy heart, that thou shouldst lie unto the Holy Ghost?"

To the blinding influence of Satan on the human mind, the apostle ascribes the inefficacy of a preached gospel: "If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost; in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ should shine into their hearts." When men believe on Christ,

they are spoken of as “translated out of darkness into light, and from the power of Satan unto God.” Thus is he clearly “the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.”

There is no scene of wickedness, no great deception instituted or carried out, no flagrant wrong inflicted, in which he has not a part, and which does not form an element in his empire among men. He is not, nor can he be as a finite being, present in more than one place or in one heart at a time, but his motions are swift as thought, and he has the credit as leader of all that is done by his angels and subjects, and they are numberless. All is Satan’s work, but he works in chains. There are limits set, beyond which he cannot go. He may be resisted, and when duly so, we are told, will flee from us. Our Saviour has left us an example of the mode of resisting him. He will not contend long with one

who is mighty in the use and application of the inspired Scriptures.

We read in Scripture of the devil and his angels. He has, then, a dominion, and subjects. His empire, and all the agents of it, are in direct conflict with the empire of Christ and his followers. Against Him and them is his enmity peculiarly directed. The one is an empire of light and love, the other of darkness and hatred, and these have no communion. Accordingly, when men's minds are at all awakened to look to Christ, Satan is busy to prevent it. He would have us look anywhere than to Him. He bids us look to our good works, our excellent character. He would have us look to ministers, or books, or feelings, or prayers, or anything than Christ, because in Him is our only help and remedy. While the Spirit of God directs us to Him alone, Satan directs us away from Him, and, alas, with how much success often! He is

wonderfully busy when men have motions to repent and reform, to make them come short of any really good and saving effect ; to cause them to end in a false peace of conscience, or in a mere righteousness of their own.

But should Satan be foiled in his machinations and devices to conceal Christ from our view, he never remits his efforts to disturb our faith in Him. He tempts the Christian to draw back from holiness ; to neglect his most secret duties ; to undervalue his privileges ; to be conformed to the world ; to seek present earthly good as a portion, to presumptuous sins, to unbelief in every form it can take in leading the soul from Christ and duty. When these various temptations fail, he turns “the accuser of the brethren,” and endeavours, by false suggestions on the unpardonableness of sin, to make the Christian despair of the Divine mercy. When he cannot prevail in this way, he assails him with his “fiery darts,” and fills him with dreadful fears and dire fore-

bodings of final perdition. Thus he seeks to destroy his faith in the "blood of the everlasting covenant," and to put out the light of his hope forever. The tendency of all he does is to turn the mind and heart away from Christ, and involve them in his own darkness. He is satisfied that we should rest in ourselves, rest in the world, rest in the memory of good done or intended, rest anywhere, so long as we anchor not our hope on Christ. All the might which he ever devoted to the Divine service and glory, while he dwelt in the realms of light, and all the aid he can command from his many legions, he thus now employs to dishonour God, to allure unrenewed men to perdition, and to *wear out the saints of the Most High*.

We know little of the mode of this deceiver's influence. We only know that it is inconceivably great, and matchless in art; and that the interests of his dominion are all opposed to the kingdom of Christ. But we may

also learn something of the modes of his attack from the character of his temptations with our Saviour. From these we can at least see that he understands human nature, and has the effrontery to claim and offer every worldly thing as his gift. He knows what springs in our breast he can touch with best effect. He knows our remaining corruption, and what temptations will excite it. He knows our weakness, as is seen in his conversation concerning Job, and in the trial to which he subjected him. There is not a tender point in our nature, not a turn in life, which is not open to his view. He changes his mode of attack to suit our case, one time coming to us as an angel of light, essaying to do us good ; at another, he comes as a power of darkness, to stir up our fears, to cripple and overwhelm us in grief and disappointment.

He raises storms in our passions, and diffuses his darkness over our affections and

hopes, till *the light that is in us be darkened, and then how great is that darkness!* O how great, how fearful a foe is he, and yet how little heeded! We are led captive by him and know it not. His is a captivity which so accords with our nature and with the course of the world which carries us along, that we discover not that it is a bondage. Consider what we are, and then consider what we might have been but for him. Ponder on his devices, for they are many, and we are warned against them with an urgency and frequency that should engage our earnest attention. See how he works, “going about seeking whom he may devour.” Does our natural temper incline us to be proud and ambitious, he presents the honors and flatteries of the world. Does our natural temper incline us to resent injuries, then he hastens to provoke our wrath, knowing that passion will magnify the injuries done, and incite to deeper revenge. Does our natural temper incline us to be indolent,

then he presents the difficulties of religion, to discourage and deter us from the exercise of that diligence which is necessary to surmount them and make our "calling and election sure." Does our natural temper incline us to be presuming and courageous, then he tries to persuade us that courage can accomplish any thing, shows us what it has done for others, and thus makes us self-confident, and gradually prepares us for a fall by causing us to depart from God in whom all our strength lies. Does our natural temper incline us to be timid and irresolute, then he takes advantage from affliction and disappointment, to sink us into despondency, and make us relax our exertions for the honour of Christ and for our own salvation. Does our natural temper incline us to be censorious, then he strives to increase the blindness we have to our own infirmities, while he magnifies in our eyes the faults of others—thus effacing the law of charity from our minds. Does our natural

temper incline us to be covetous, then in ten thousand ways, for he is at home here, does he attack the Christian, tells him what good he can do with riches, what respectability and influencē they give, what a security they are against fears and wants; tells him not to be too scrupulous about means, but to get the end, and then be liberal in atoning for the wrong; incites him to strain every nerve, to reach far this way and far that; to give up all his faculties to acquisition, sure, that when old, he may recline in ease, and give himself up more fully to the meditation and pursuit of what is good. Thus does he endeavour to reconcile our sense of duty with our pursuit of riches, our love of the world with our love of God, and too often, fatally succeeds. With such an adversary as this, commanding his legions, it is a question that should wake up all the energies of the soul, "What shall be the end thereof?" What the termination of this conflict?

4. Great foes as are the world and Satan, there is yet another adversary with whom the Christian has to contend, and one more fearful than these. I will not say it is more powerful than the devil and the world, but it is one even more dangerous, because less suspected, and not so apt to be watched and resisted. This adversary has its seat in our own nature; *it is our own evil heart.* From the evils which arise from this source, the Christian has more to fear than from any other cause. Powerful as the conflict may be out of himself and abroad, he has to carry it on, and contest yet more earnestly and perseveringly at home, with his own darling self, whom he is in so much danger of trusting and indulging, and in his own heart, where victory ten thousand times hangs in doubt, while to the eyes of other men the world may seem trampled under his feet, and Satan himself bruised and vanquished.

If his own heart was right, the Christian would find little difficulty in overcoming the

world, and resisting the devil. It is by availing themselves of his weaknesses and imperfections, that these enemies gain any advantage over him. It is only on his corruptions that they can fasten any hold. If he had no weights to lay aside, and no besetting sins, he would run without interruption and without weariness, the race that is set before him. Neither would he need a Father's chastisements, that "he might be a partaker of his holiness." The privileges, the enjoyments, and friendships of this life, would only be as so many cords to draw him nearer, and bind him closer in blissful and adoring allegiance to his throne. All that he enjoyed here, would be to him as a foretaste of that loving-kindness which is better than life, and instead of allying him to the earth, as it now does, it would make him pant and thirst for the living God; it would make him rise as on eagle's wings, towards the sun, whence come all the influences which cheer, and enliven, and mature him here for the bliss

of heaven. But as his spiritual state now is, he rises little, and for the most part but hobbles along. He is liable to abuse both prosperity and adversity, to make his enjoyments and sufferings the occasion of greater guilt and condemnation. He is full of weak points, and points tender to the influence of the world and the assaults of Satan. He is easily provoked, easily tempted, easily led astray, easily put off his guard, and put upon seeking his own things. The cares of the world come in, and wither and dry up his religious affections, and he sees no more the beauty than he enjoys the sweetness of spiritual life. His passions are excited with unholy fire; pride, covetousness, and impatience come in where gentleness, humility, and holy joy went out. He is a troubled, struggling, punished, and unsatisfied being, or he is too far gone to be this. He is then himself the greatest adversary to his own growth in grace.

We shall see this, if we examine more par-

ticularly the dangers that arise from his own heart, and enter into the field where are the enemies of "his own household," the armies of his own breast, who are the most difficult to conquer, the last to surrender, and from whose remaining corruption and rebellion, when supposed to be slain again and again, he will never be secure, till he enters "the everlasting doors" of the upper sanctuary, and the power and grace of God, his Redeemer, have shut him and them apart for eternity. We are not left to imagination on this subject, but have safe and unerring advisers. One of them tells us, "I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin, which is in my members." He speaks as if he felt the power of sin in his very bones, reminding him of the difficulty and necessity "of keeping under the body, and bringing it into subjection." Another apostle writes of the "lusts which war in our members, and

from which come wars and fightings with one another." Still another, addressing his brethren, says, "I beseech you abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul." To these, we must add also, the desires of the mind, which are often more subtle and unmanageable than those of the flesh. There are sinful propensities of the mind, as well as the body, and we must find them out by their nature, and raise revenge against them. They cluster in what is called "the carnal mind." They are such as vanity, pride, contempt, anger, hatred, and the like, qualities that enter into our very spirits, and show of what temper and order we are. The bible gives us a roll of the enemies within us. It reads thus: "From within out of the heart proceed evil thoughts," and after enumerating every evil deed and disposition, every vain conceit and desire, concludes by adding, "and such like." The roll is intended to include all wickedness, extending to the most concealed refinements

of thought and purpose. Rightly viewed, they are a host which no man can number, and yet they are all foes which every Christian has to contend with, and “resist unto blood,” if need be. Nor is this all: as modified forms of these, and springing from them, he has also to fight against a proneness to neglect his duties, to undervalue and misimprove his privileges, to seek great worldly advantages for himself and his children, if he be a parent, in short, to all the forms of defec-tion which a heart sanctified only in part, can take, and will be sure to take, if not sedulously watched and resisted,—such as a disposition to distrust God in regard to the allotments of his providence, to be ungrateful for mercies and discontented with our circumstances, and to fail in sincerity in the most sacred duties of the family, the closet, the sanctuary, and the Lord’s table. This is but a very imperfect sketch, a mere outline of our case. We cannot see all, much less tell all we see of the

spirit's strife. The heart is surely a crowded field of conflict. The enemies in armed array comprehend our total self, and yet a self often ready to boast of its freedom from them, and taking no care of their advances. Still, the life that is in us, is a hidden secret of being, a seed that grows in the death of self; and its ripened fruits appear as on withered branches, in affections and passions from which the green and sap of nature have departed as by a trial of fire.

Now if we consider the many sinful tendencies and impulses of the body and mind, as so many enemies operating against the growth of spiritual life, we shall see how great the danger is, that we shall be enticed by them from the *narrow way that leadeth unto life*. Add to this consideration also, the fact that we are not only to resist and subdue them all as foes, but to make constantly a further effort to "add to our faith virtue, and to our virtue knowledge, temperance, godliness, brotherly kind-

ness, charity," in ever increasing measures, that so "an *abundant entrance* may be ministered unto us, into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." And with this view, take into the account also, the various perplexities of the Christian, in this his prescribed and difficult course; his fears and doubts, his darkness, weakness, and infirmities, concomitants all of his best estate, and does it not appear that he must be conquered, and lose the prize of life? Was there ever known a combat so unequal? He that conquers himself, is greater than he that taketh a city; but here is self, and a world, and the devil to conquer, and each of these as an enemy has already a partial supremacy in the heart and spirit, each aids the other, and all are striving to one end,—the spoiling of the image of God in the soul. These enemies are all around, and fill every place; they are not to be fled from, and must not be yielded to; there is no retreat, no surrender, no quar-

ter in the warfare, but all is on the stake of victory. O, what a conflict of powers is here, what odds against the soul, what marshalling of infernal bands, what shows of retreat to gain advantage, what lying in wait to destroy, what guile and deception, what pretences of friendship, what bribes to defection, what proffers of reward, what summoning of the passions to strife and debate, what spreading out of the world's attractions, what garnishing of its pleasures, what tittleing of its fields to the yielding, what spoils to be shared with the vanquished, and all artifices to take hearts already half traitorous to the foe! Who can look upon it without having the feeling of danger raised to agony? If the Christian had to contend alone, we might indeed despair of him in advance, or if he had to fight with carnal weapons or in his own strength, we might give him up as lost.

CHAPTER III.

ENCOURAGEMENTS.—METHODS AND AIDS OF
GRACE IN THE FIGHT OF FAITH.

No wise man would engage in such a warfare as has been described, such a “fight of faith” as the Christian life must be, without great encouragements of success; nor then, unless the spoils of victory should be such as to make good amends for the sufferings and labour to be endured. It is important, therefore, that we should know all the encouragements and inducements to persevering faithfulness, and have our eye ever fixed on them as sources of strength and hope.

In considering the difficulties and dangers of our way, we have perhaps been ready to say with the servant of Elisha, at sight of a great and hostile army surrounding them,

“Alas, my master, what shall we do?” “Fear not,” was the answer, “for they that be with us are more than they that be with them.” “Through God we shall do valiantly ; for He it is that shall tread down our enemies.” When we open the word of God—“behold the mountain of our safety is full of horses and chariots round about us ;” and we hear Him on whom God has laid our help, the “Captain of our salvation,” saying to each child of his love, “Fear not, for I am with thee ;” “be not dismayed, for I am thy God ;” “I will strengthen thee, yea, I will help thee, yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.” “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” So that the Christian may well say, and make his boast, “The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear.”

The field upon which we are entering now, is so large, and comprises such a variety of objects, that we will first take a general survey of it, confining our attention to the most

prominent provisions and directions of the Scriptures.

1. The armour of the Christian. “Wherefore,” considering the enemies you have to encounter, “take unto you the whole armour of God;” a provision, the very name and source of which give promise that so far as the “fight of faith” and its results depend on this, they shall not be doubtful. We have a description of this armour in its different parts, among which is the girdle of truth—the breastplate of righteousness—the helmet of salvation—feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace—the shield of faith, wherewith to quench, or ward off, all the fiery darts of the wicked—and that which all look to and spring from, the *sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God*. The apostle’s directions, and the character of the parts in this armour, imply a severe contest, exacting from us much study and preparation. They amount to saying—be established in the

sincere and full belief of the truths of revelation, from which you are to derive instruction and strength—be faithful to maintain holiness of heart and life, for these will make you proof against the wiles and accusations of the adversary. With a sincere and unwavering faith, and a firm and joyful hope in God's help, be prepared for boldness and firmness of advance, and for pushing every advantage gained, till all your enemies are subdued. Take the instructions of God's word, bind them about you as a girdle, live in them as an element, and use them as a weapon with which you may meet all the falsehoods of Satan and the cavils of unbelieving men, and with which also you may silence and subdue the doubts and unbelief of your own heart, which occasion your greatest weakness, your slothfulness, and your frequent departures from truth and duty.

Another, and most important part of this armour St. John alludes to, when he says—

“They overcame him,” that is, Satan, called here the accuser of the brethren, “by the blood of the Lamb, and by the record of their testimony”—an impressive description of the power of faith in “Christ crucified,” to secure the victory. To be permitted to look continually to the “Lamb of God,” the completeness of his atonement, the perfection of his righteousness, and to feel all the high and ennobling motives which they furnish, and the pledges of victory which they give—what like this can impart strength, earnestness, and determined resolution? He must be a heartless, a faithless soldier of the cross, who can contemplate the scenes of that day, when his Lord in dying conquered and prepared the way for him to conquer, and not feel his love enkindled, his courage renewed, and his faith established, that neither the world, the devil, nor “the old man” within himself, if he does his duty, can deprive him of a victory, complete and eternal.

2. With the Christian's armour, there must be strength to use it. But what is the strength of man? It is weakness. His purposes, his resolution, his energy, if he is to depend on these alone, he can do nothing. Whence, then, is his strength to continue the fight, armed and equipped as he is? "Without me," says Christ, "ye can do nothing;" but then, he adds, "My strength is made perfect in weakness." We may then have an intellectual might in the Scriptures, we may even clothe ourselves in their armour, but it will avail nothing, and we shall be able to do nothing, without strength obtained from God. It is "He that worketh in us," to whom we must look for all effective power. A prevailing sense of weakness, is a secret of life and power. As the apostle says, "When I am weak, then am I strong." This is a great mystery to "the old man" in us, but to the "new man" as created in Christ Jesus, it is the simplest of truths. The strength of faith,

what is it? What but a resigning of all strength of our own, a power that can only be realized out of weakness? A sense of weakness is our best security, for that only will prompt us to lean on never-failing help; that only can qualify us to obey the injunction—"Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." The dependence of the Christian on the grace of God as his strength, is further taught, where it is said, "For whatsoever is born of God, overcometh the world"—words which clearly account for all the strength by which this victory is gained, from the fact that the man "is born of God," and his heart become the residence of the Holy Spirit. All his strength against sin is a derived strength. Here is the seat of his conflict. The work of grace is to make its advance through the dying of the natural man; but he dies slowly, and dies hard, surrounded with so many influences breathing life into him, and upholding his sinking powers. It is then

certain that the Divine life in us must ever be contesting with the power of sin, and that all the nursing of its being and continuance, must come from above. Here it is we strike on the source of the strength in which the Christian is to conduct "the fight of faith." The Holy Spirit, having renewed the soul, and made it his residence, puts forth his own gracious power in him, and he is thus "made mighty." He girds his loins about "with truth," imparts to him that holiness which is as a breastplate for his protection, and that faith with which he resists the devil, and overcomes the world; inspires him with wisdom and might in the Scriptures; opens his eyes to behold the wonderful things of the Divine law; indites his petitions, and gives him power with God in prayer, as well as power against sin and all his foes.

Our spiritual enemies, as we have seen, are numerous and powerful; but the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit, in the exercise and

strength of which we strive, are more than a match for them. There is a separate and mighty energy of grace for every opposing and rebellious propensity, temptation, and sin. I wish I could so marshal them side by side, that you might see the contest and work of each. It would show the wonderful economy of grace, and its adaptation to our nature. "The fruits of the Spirit" are opposed to all the "works of the flesh." Each has a contending foe in the other, and all stand front to front in irreconcilable variance.

Love to God opposes itself to the love of the world. Joy, which is another fruit of the Spirit, opposes itself to despondency and inaction. The "peace of God" is opposed to all strife and contention. Gentleness and goodness contend against envy, hatred and revenge. Meekness and humility contend against pride, vanity and self-love, in all their subtle and multiform operations, by which they counteract the work of grace, and hasten

on our fall. Love to man contends against the thousand wrongs we do to the feelings, reputation and interests of others. Faith contends with unbelief, which, in one form or other, is always working to diminish the influence of invisible things by magnifying the importance of those which are seen. Thus we see how the Spirit, by his gracious operation in the soul, exerts his mighty power. All the desires and affections of the carnal mind have their opposites in the products of his influence, and what He has begun, He will accomplish. He will "bring to nought the things which are." He will humble everything that exalteth itself against his work, choosing ever for his dwelling-place the lowly and contrite heart. There is no passion or desire, natural to corrupt man, or liable to rise in the Christian's breast, which has not a contending opposite in the "fruits of the Spirit." Thus the Divine Spirit, as well as the spirit of grace in the heart, "lusteth

against the flesh," and "these two are contrawise, the one to the other."

3. The Scriptures give some further and more particular instructions on the manner of contesting with the foes of the spirit. Christ, as a leader, having "once for all" entered into this mighty conflict, and gained the victory which has prepared the way for us to fight and conquer, has caused to be written and handed down to us many inestimable directions from the stores of his own wisdom and the experience of his followers, who have preceded us, and triumphed over all their foes.

"This charge," says St. Paul to Timothy, "I commit unto thee, according to the prophecies that went before, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare." And this is the end of all that Christ has done, and caused to be recorded for us, that we might, after Him, "war a good warfare," *good* in its being one which shall give honour to God, while it

shall ensure safety to us ; good soldiership in its being able and faithful, acceptable and triumphant.

St. Paul tells how he carried out the spirit of *this charge* in his own life. Speaking of contests for temporal advantage, he says, "Every one that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown ; but we, an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly ; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air ; but I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection." He kept in his eye "the high prize of his calling," an "incorruptible crown." He lost no time in beating the air, in uncertain and misdirected efforts ; there was no show-fighting with him ; but he aimed the blows of "the sword of the Spirit" at the particular sins and tempers which needed to be slain, and with such skill as should make sure work of sacrifice. But mark, he qualified himself to make these skilful efforts by the

training of self-denial, temperance "in all things," by which he "brought his body into subjection," and mortified those appetites and passions which "war against the soul."

He was a man of strong mind and affections. All the fires of nature burned bright in him. He was no grown child in any sense. All the symptoms of his humanity give signs of strength. His words seem to breathe with insight and power. His tastes of sin and grace, contrasted with common experiences, were as full tides of life to its last ebbing flows. Christ within him, was the hope of glory, which placed him above all earthly trials.

Speaking of that part of the contest to be maintained against the "course of this world," he says, "No man that warreth, entangleth himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier." The application which he made of this to the ministers of the word in their con-

test "for the faith," may be made with equal force to the great individual conflict of the private Christian for the victory, "through faith unto salvation." No "fighting of the good fight" can be done by him while in love with the world, under the influence of its temptations and pleasures, and burdened with its cares, interests and sorrows. There must be deliverance from these hindrances, and freedom to do "this one thing," and that with strength undivided, with attention single and intense. "Knowing that we have in heaven a better and more enduring substance," the hope of this must live and glow in our hearts, carrying us forward in duty with a continual looking for the brightness that is soon to break upon our view. There must be a current in our affections, which no resistance of the world can check. There must be a rush of life towards heaven as to a home, which shall make living but a swift and sweet moving thereto. There must be a parting of

our affections with all things else, which shall be as the lighting up of the mind and storing it with better things.

Once more, the apostle says of his use of God's grace, "*striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.*" The grace of God in him wrought mightily, and he wrought *mightily according to it*. He says nothing of any separate action of either, but they wrought together, he following on, and of course, in a right direction, and by the right way. His adversaries might be very many and very strong, but there could be no doubt of his victory over them, while striving according to the mightily working grace of God in him. He knew this, and it was the thing he was so often *persuaded of*, on occasions, when his confidence burst out as if it had no bounds, and would pluck heaven down to earth. There really is no weakness in any Christian, but that which arises from himself, his sloth, his reliance on his own strength, his

neglect to use and increase the grace of God given to him.

Considering the examples and rules of holy living, given in the Scriptures, we must be convinced that they are as much neglected as we fall short of the spirituality and success, they are intended to aid and encourage us in attaining. In the prosecution of the Christian life, we have seldom more than a divided mind and heart. It is no wonder that our hope is not established, no wonder that there is fear and trembling in our faith, even such as devils have, for we use not the fidelity, and have not the striving and crucifixion of saints. There must be the energy of a consecration, which proves us as soldiers prepared to die, rather than be conquered; and which shall cause us "to resist unto blood," if need be, "striving against sin." So great are the concerns of the soul, that, if we duly prized them, they would run every thing else into littleness. Our dividing the heart about them with the

world, shows an utter want of discrimination, a sottishness of mind that is satisfied without attainment. It is said of those who overcame the *accuser of the brethren* "by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony," that "they loved not their lives unto the death." They felt in them the powers of a joyful consecration, and so, every "soldier of the cross" must feel, must "do and suffer." Death must be nothing to him, put in competition with victory. "He that will save his life," says Christ, in reference to this very point, "shall lose it, but he that loseth his life for my sake, shall find it," shall obtain eternal life. "Be ye then faithful *unto* death," is His direction. He would try our faith and virtue. He will have a full heart or none. Does your courage and resolution fail, this shows that you are not worthy of Him; that you see not the comeliness, the treasure there is in Him; but will you move on in his strength, trusting in Him though you be slain,

the issue shall be safe for you, perfectly, gloriously, eternally safe.

4. There is another point of view in which we may contemplate this subject. I have alluded to "the shield of faith," as a part of the Christian's armour. Faith also enters into the manner of conducting the warfare against the power of sin, and it is for aids to this end, we are now inquiring.

"This," we are told, "is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." Visible things, things temporal in duration, make up the world ; things invisible and eternal, make up the objects of faith. The former appeal to sense ; the latter, to spirit ; and the contest of each for supremacy is very great, producing often a mixed state of the affections incompatible with the full enjoyment of either. We have no natural power to rise above this state. Every thing about us feeds the growth of sense, making even the mind *carnal*. A new life is conferred on Christians, but it is a

life which they “live by faith on the Son of God.” Their state is essentially changed by the introduction of this life ; “all things become new ;” things, that were before out of sight, become the great prize and end of their being. They only understand “what is the hope of God’s calling, and what are the riches of his inheritance, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power in those who believe.” They do all things “by faith,” declining, with Moses, the pleasures of sin, and the honour and emoluments of the world, and choosing before them all, if need be, “to suffer affliction with the people of God.” Faith gives the heart a better and sweeter resting-place than the world. It is a victory over it, in the sense it imparts of a better inheritance ; and if we would but consider how transient is every earthly good, how soon we are to part with it, and how poor we are at parting, unless we have a “more enduring substance,” we might be more content with

the little we gain of it, and be induced "to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip."

The greatest hindrance to our advancing in the divine life, consists in the pre-occupation of the affections by objects ungenial to it, and nothing but faith can displace them, by opening to us the substance of "better things." A dead, an unimpressive faith, is an essential absurdity. It is a working principle, and "works by love." Faith respects objects not only most worthy, but certain to take hold of the affections; for true faith presents and receives things as they are. It must do so; for taking things as they are not, is doubting them as they are. We cannot believe without an accordance of the heart with the nature of the things believed. Faith in God then, must presume and make us in some degree like God, and God is love. Faith in Christ, including his atonement and teaching,

must move the heart to Him, and to such objects as He was moved by. It is the yielding up of ourselves to the obedience of Christ, which is to live the life He did, *abounding in every good work*.

If then, we would have great life in religion, we must have great faith. Works of faith are free and cheerful works, because works of love. Whatever we do without faith, wants the element of freedom ; it may be free in the sense of gratifying some natural impulse, but it is not free in the sense of rational service to God. Our good works without faith are dead forms, self-imposed tyrannies, without a divine sympathy, or any thing we can call liberty.

Faith is as different from credulity, as weakness is from strength. Credulity takes things without inquiring, and is too indolent to look into them, but faith is a virtue armed with reason, braving dangers, and taking up mountains of difficulty as very little things. Faith

takes small account of the world, because Christ is its pattern and rule of estimation. To all its temptations it makes a resistance, "steadfast" in its upward view. It looks on all its glory, and says, Ye gems and precious stones of earth, tell me! can you enrich or adorn an immortal spirit? Can you do more than deck the crumbling tenement it deigns to live in? Speak, ye riches, and honours, and titles! I would know your utmost worth! And ye thrones and dominions, I would listen to *your* claims upon the search and homage of mind! Were you or were you not "made like unto corruptible things," and will you not melt in the day of trial, and return to dust?

Faith also holds an important place in that part of our conflict which is to be maintained against Satan, "whom resist," says an apostle, "steadfast in the faith." "Above all," says another, "take the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery

darts of the wicked," that is, of the devil, the *wicked one*. Faith here, is made a most important help, the protection and security of all other graces, as the shield is the most important part of our armour, that which protects all the rest; that which can ward off attacks against any part and from any quarter. These "fiery darts" are evil thoughts, sudden temptations, which wound and torment the soul, and come like arrows shot from an enemy in ambush. We must meet them with the "shield of faith," turn them back, trusting in God, and relying on his promised aid.

Faith in the help of God, inspires a holy boldness, in which the Christian will exert, without faltering, all his energies. Faith alone, carries the soul to God, who, as trusted, will do all things for us. Nature flies for relief to *broken cisterns*, but faith to *living fountains*. There is no power but faith in Christ, that can drive the world out of the heart, so that, God can come and take his

place in it, and give it aims and affections, which amount to a victory over it.

Faith too, always finds its objects of trust out of ourselves. It keeps up a continual look out in the soul. It ever lays hold on what is outward. It casts its anchor, not in the heart, but in the sea when the storm rages. The "new life" in us, is but a creature, and not to be trusted. So far as it is trusted, it is debased and weakened. Our good works, how good soever they are, yet are our works, and so far as they are ours, are imperfect. At best, they have more of ourselves in them than of the Spirit. They have so much weakness and imperfection in them, that they cannot *stand alone*; and therefore, as faith teaches, we are to trust not grace in us, but grace in God through Christ, *forgetting the things which are behind*, the things we have done, the attainments we have made, *and pressing towards the mark for the prize of our high*

calling, as if every thing was but beginning, until all is obtained.

Faith looks outwardly so steadily as to destroy the sense of home in the world, and keep up the recollection of God and heaven in the soul. This is a great help in chastising and keeping under our love of creatures.

Faith magnifies the objects it feeds on, and those objects are of such a nature, that they break out with fatness and sweetness the more they are fed upon; and this again causes the dying away of all lower tastes and attachments.

Faith works by love, and purifies the heart, and these are effects that we must have wrought in us; for our affections are not naturally pure enough to choose spiritual things, but prefer grosser things as more congenial. It is then the tried remedy of our state, working in us like leaven, till the whole is changed. Oh, if we had but faith to answer to the glori-

ous truths which God has revealed, it would inspire us with a love thereto, and gather a purity therefrom, which would make us proof against the assaults of Satan and the world !

Faith is a bold grace, “confident of this one thing,” *that God first loved us, and gave his Son to die for us.* In this confidence is the believer’s strength. It is grounded upon the worthiness of a mediator, who, having opened to us a way to God’s favour, appears now in heaven to keep it open. This is a “confidence towards God,” a going to Him for great things, because none can be greater than he has bestowed, and it goes with an argument which he cannot resist.

Faith is the root of all other graces. When it fails, all fail. As the decay of a tree appears first by the withering of its leaves and branches, when the cause lies deep in the heart or root, so the decay of spirituality in a believer, may appear first from the company he keeps, his carriage, his outward show, but the ground of

it lies far back, concealed from view ; it is a weakness of faith. The proper cure of any spiritual decay, is an increase of faith. And when we consider the indisposition of our hearts to trust in God, which is always strongest when we most need to trust in Him, our sin and departure from Him the more increasing our unbelief, and making the breach still wider ; when we consider our proneness to live by sense and natural reason, to fall below the height of divine things, and to rest ourselves on false bottoms ; sinking into contentment with creatures, and bringing such guilt upon our souls, as makes us afraid to draw near to God, or indulge serious thoughts of him ; we must see how difficult it is to have faith without works, and how hard it is for us to say more than, *Lord I believe, help thou mine unbelief.*

Faith keeps its eye on the promises, and in them are the riches of the Christian's strength. It looks at them in their divine order ; first,

the promise of forgiveness, then of healing and sanctifying grace ; next, of an inheritance in the kingdom of heaven to them that are sanctified, and then the promises of all things needful in our way to this kingdom. These promises are all wells of salvation, and faith employs itself in drawing water from them. They are all day-springs in the heart, and faith collects their beams and makes them a sun within us. There is life, and joy, and sanctification in the promises, and faith extracts these properties, and through them, *makes us partakers of a divine nature.*

In short, what good thing is there which faith does not or may not do ? Let us set ourselves to the trial of its power, not despising the little we may have of it, but increasing it, till it becomes, from the least of seeds, a tree with strong and spreading branches, for the birds of heaven to light on. Look at that “great cloud of witnesses” to the power of faith, which wrapt the soul of an apostle in

eulogy of their deeds, as having "through faith" subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, and of whom, as if he would say all and could not say enough, he proclaims, "the world was not worthy." The great mystery of their persevering holiness, and of their victories over Satan, the world, and themselves, was, that they "lived, and moved, and had their being," in the exercise of unwavering trust in God, their helper. In this trust, "out of weakness they were made strong, waxed valiant in fight," "endured to the end," and "finished their course with joy." Let us "follow on," after them, "to know the Lord," who, when we do little, and tremble at danger, says, "O, ye of little faith!" Trust in me, and you shall never fail, your faith shall be able to remove mountains of sin and difficulty.

Looking to these elders, patriarchs and

prophets of whom the apostle speaks, and after them, to all saints of whom we read in the Scriptures, we are struck with the fact that faith, or the religious principle in them, was strong enough to overpower every other passion, and to carry them forward in a joyful endurance of every trial in the way of duty. Piety was a life, a full life with them ; and in this respect they greatly differed from many who call themselves Christians. They could be relied upon for truth, for justice, for patience, for self-denial, for charity of opinion and practice, for every “fruit of the Spirit,” when any occasion arose to make a trial of it ; and so it will ever be when true religion is the reigning principle of the heart, and if it be not the reigning, it is no principle at all—it is but a thing professed, a sensibility of conscience that wakes up under reproof and obliges to some duties, not a thing *lived in and lived out*. There is great beauty and excellence in a truly Christian heart, something

that may be relied upon and trusted to, something far beyond the charities of the natural heart; these break under the pressure of wrong, or dissolve to the touch of interest, but Christian principle runs over, and comes out beyond all regards to self; it holds the scales of justice with a hand that never trembles or tires in its office. This is the reason why, when *trials come*, so many fall away; they are not so decided in their tastes and purposes as to be altogether one thing, rather than another. They are like “a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed;” “carried about with every wind of doctrine,” every wind of passion and fancy, walking as others “in the vanity of their mind,” not speaking “truth every one with his neighbour,” and letting the “sun go down on their wrath,” “*giving place to the devil.*”

I fear I shall fail to impress the importance of this subject on the mind of the reader. Decision in religion, entering into the affec-

tions and purposes, and thus giving character to the man, is essential to all progress and comfort in the Christian life. Without this we shall fight to little purpose, making only shows of resistance. We shall be neither "hot nor cold," neither this nor that, on occasions which try the spirit. It is the want of a decided character that breaks the force of all we do and feel, and makes it so hard to believe and realize that we have a life of God. It is our want of a looking eye and an uplifted hand, which gives boldness to our foes. And accordingly the Scriptures abound in warnings against this spirit. These warnings are grounded on a foresight of our enemies. "Wherefore take unto yourself the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand, and having done all, to stand." Having "done all," as if there was much to be done, before we could be expected "to stand!" Considering the "mark of our high calling," and the difficulty of reaching it, St. Paul de-

clares, "This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord," that "ye walk not as other Gentiles walk," but "put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." He would have us as "strong men armed," decided in purpose and burning with divine convictions. He would not have us forget the necessity of a patient continuance of the fight, and of continual caution against becoming "weary and faint in our minds." He would have us "tender-hearted, forgiving one another," "working with our hands the things which are good, that we may have to give to him that needeth," not that we may "consume it on our lusts." He would have "no corrupt communication proceed out of our mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying." But to do this, or the half of it, we must be vigilant, be earnest; we must give ourselves to habitual prayerfulness for Divine assistance; we must keep a continual "watch on our lips," and on all the

outgoings of the heart; we must preserve a holy tenderness of conscience, a fear of "drawing back unto perdition," a pervading sense of responsibility, and a steady, constraining, tender regard to the honour of Christ.

Above all, and through all, we should be looking to Him "who endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God," having spoiled principalities and powers "for us," and "made a show of them openly, triumphing over them." The way he went we are to go. It is a way all along lighted up with the shining of virtues for our imitation. It is the "way of life," and if we delight not to walk in it, it is because we have not life, but only a "name to live." It is a shining way, shining most brightly when it leads through sorrow, death and the grave, that we may follow on and have "no fear of evil." It is a going through all before us, and yet not going so far but we may hear his voice, saying,

“follow me,” “be not afraid.” If we can contemplate what He has done for us, and done with our sympathies, without feeling an energy of life towards Him, we must be destitute of any emulation of goodness, any excellence of sympathy. If we remember his patient endurance, his compassion, his love to our souls which “was stronger than death;” his jealousy for the honour of his Father, which left nothing undone to maintain his glory and his law in the eyes of all intelligent creatures, shall we ever complain of the painfulness or the arduousness of the process of crucifixion to the world, and of conformity to the image of Him who has left us such an “example that we should walk in his steps,” and who is all the while touched with a feeling of our infirmities and woes, having been “tempted in all points like as we are?” Ah! this is the Sun whose sacred attraction we should never lose, whose beams should irradiate our darkness, and beneath whose genial

and life-giving influences the gracious affections of our souls should grow and mature to perfection! Here is an object which the eye of discipleship never loses, and never tires with gazing on!

“The love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all that they who live should not henceforth live unto themselves.” “God commends his love to us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” “It became Him, of whom and by whom are all things, to make the Captain of our salvation perfect through suffering.” Accordingly he took on him our nature, he refused not the agonies of the cross, he loved us even to death; and this he did, *that God might be just, and yet justify us.* Well may the apostle say, “the love of Christ constraineth us,” and well did he judge that the end of his death was that we

might no more “live unto ourselves, but unto Him” who hath so given himself for us.

If we keep our eyes fixed on Christ with affections suitable to such an object, He will be in us as a “river of life,” with a strong current bearing us up, and carrying away all resistance. Love is the transforming power of our nature, and there is no object like this to enkindle love. This is the “Tree of life,” in whose leaves there is healing, and whose sap has an inflaming sweetness to the soul. It is the “Fountain of living waters”; the Christian’s heart, whose pulsations convey vigour to all the extremes of duty; the sun, shining on and turning the night of life into day; the breath of joy and the root of comeliness in all creatures. From the very nature of the case, if there were no law requiring it, we should infer that a Christian’s love must be a supreme love, rising above and overpowering all conflicting attachments. To have such incitements to love as he has, such a calling

and example, such a “weight of glory” in reserve ; and to merit nothing, and be capable of doing nothing of merit ; to find “all things now ready,” and the invitation gone out, if these things cannot take up a whole heart, they will take none at all ; they are not to share with others in our love ; they are the sum of good, and the sum of blessedness is to have them ours.

When the affections are drawn out in complacency towards an object, the offerings of the heart to it are *free-will offerings*. Nothing that we can do for that object has any hardship in it. What the heart moves to, is sweetly and gladly done. And so, in religion our way is made smooth and easy by love. What we want to make duty welcome and improving, is a decided, conscious, tasting love in the service of God, and this a steady *looking unto Jesus*, is most fitted to inspire. He has ability to keep what we commit unto him—he has sympathy with us, he has property in our

nature, he is both God and man, by an incommunicable union with the Father, so that the power of the Father is his power, and engaged to keep his people, as he says, *The Father who gave them me is greater than all*; and again, *I and my Father are one*. And he changes not; he is *the Rock of ages*. *He is the same yesterday, to-day and forever*; able to defend his people now, and as able to do it in all time to come as he has been in all time past. None, then, but strong and confident affections are suitable to a Christian life.

— This view of Christ should put to flight all our discouraging thoughts and apprehensions. It should arm us with courage and resolution in “the fight of faith.” See how it elevated the soul of the apostle when he said, *I am persuaded that nothing can separate me from the love of God in Christ*, and went on in a strain of unrivalled eloquence. It was a triumph of faith and love. Hear David, too:

The Lord is my portion, whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid? And with Him for a helper every soul may say, *I will not fear.* I will not fear thee, thou wicked one! powerful, deceiving and malicious as thou art; for Jesus, to whom I flee, holds thee in chains! I will not fear you, ye corruptions of nature! trouble me as you will, for “His grace is sufficient for me,” yea, “Christ strengthening me, I can do all things!” I will not fear you, ye temptations of the world! ye honours, pleasures and treasures of the world! I can resign you all; I have a *more enduring substance*; I have a *hold on eternal life*; my *Beloved is mine, and I am his!*

4. As a further means of invigorating our affections, and of gaining the “victory through faith,” let us consider more at large the duty of watchfulness, of keeping a *good look out*. Our Lord directs his disciples to join prayer to vigilance, keeping up the idea that we are

ever to depend on the help of grace, and yet ever to act for ourselves ; *watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation.* If we consider how often our spiritual foes have gained advantage of us, how often we have fallen into snares which have entangled us in former instances, and repeated sins of which we had repented, we shall see that all this might have been avoided if we had been watchful. And so, if we consider how many days and years of our short life have passed, with little or no advancement in the Divine life, we shall see that things have been running *at loose ends* with us for want of care.

Again, if we consider how many opportunities of well-doing we have neglected, how slothful we have been in the government of our own appetites and passions, how often we have offended in word and deed, and yet how much is required of us, and with what love and alacrity we are to do it, showing ourselves *faithful unto death*, if we would receive the

crown of life; more than this, if we consider the many hindrances which lie in the way of our duty, how many snares we find in our worldly state, in our pleasures, in our disappointments, in *the cares of this life*, aggravated and rendered more enticing and dangerous by our natural indolence and the opposition of our hearts to *the work that is given us to do*, we shall see how important it is that we should *wake out of sleep*, and keep a diligent watch, lest destruction come upon us unawares.

All that I have written of the number and nature of our spirit's foes, and of the provisions for our conflict with them, show that we must be in earnest; the whole tide of our nature must be set against them, if we would indulge the hope of victory. This is so just, so plain an inference, that I would fix the mind upon it as a discovery on the way of life, without regarding which that way cannot be continued in. There can be nothing done

in the “good fight,” without strong and decided affections and convictions. The objects set forth to move us now, and those to be obtained in the end, are of such a nature that the mind and heart must take a *strong* hold of them, if they take any ; they are great and overshadowing when apprehended, and our trying to escape them would be like running to get out of the light of day. All the powers of our nature are appealed to and taken up by these objects, our love and gratitude, our fears and repentings, and our desire of happiness, all-comprehensive as it is. They are all gifts out of the fulness of Christ, but they teach that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world. They include faith in the means and end of the divine life, which as an *evidence of things not seen*, worketh by love, and overcometh the world. Though we are converted by grace, justified by grace, and saved altogether by grace, yet we have a light

that is not to be hid, and talents that are to be improved, not buried in the earth. Christ is the model of human perfection. Never was one more active and earnest than He. As a human being he was sinless. He fulfilled all righteousness, and refused no compliance with duty. He loved us with a love greater and purer than any wherewith we can love him. He loved God with all his heart, and found it to be his meat and drink to do his will. Thus we have the brightest example of diligence and zeal in the life of our blessed Redeemer which, when coupled with the command to *redeem our time ; to do with our might what our hands find to do ;* should stir up all the gifts of his grace within us, that we may follow on not only to know him better, but to be altogether like him ; and yet such is the slowness of our hearts, that we spend hours, and perhaps days, without any lively thoughts of him ; and this, though there is not a condition, temptation or event in life ; in which it does not become us

to look to him, either as our teacher or guardian, our example or our strength, our intercessor or our forerunner, our all in all. Oh! if we see how it is, and how it has been with us; how soon we lose the sense of the value of his atonement when the burden of guilt is removed; how often we think of what he was, and what he did upon earth, of what he is now in heaven, and what he is doing there, without any *thoughts arising in our hearts* worthy of him; how much of our time we spend in dozing moods, or in conversation and amusements which can be turned to no account; how our minds are left to run into vacancy, while we might be cherishing good purposes in them and storing them with powers to carry them out; how many temptations we fall before, which a little preparation and resolution would have enabled us to resist; how indolent we are in all things, so that we are as long again about the little we do as we need be, and after all do it not half

as well as we might ;—we shall be convinced that most of our difficulty and weakness, our despondence and discomfort in religion, would find a remedy in earnest wakefulness.

Again, an earnest, watchful spirit, is required by the nature and concealed action of our foes. The Christian has a body of sin. He has every corruption that can be in the heart, but then it is under the restraint of grace. His corruption works, and grace works. But we may be under the power of temptation to evil without knowing it, unless we are watchful. Pride and vanity may come in, and form a disposition which does not use, but resists grace ; yea, we may have pride of grace. When this is the case, however, we are proud of such graces as we have not,—proud of forgiveness, of humility, of knowledge, of faith. Something within will be sure to take an evil turn, if we are off our guard. And this once done, we are weakened by it, the spirit of grace is offended, and thus we

wax worse and worse, with little sense or care that we do so. Thus we come into a state from which we can never recover, without waking up and calling on the help of the Lord. But now that we have got ourselves into trouble, He may not soon come to our relief. He may leave us in the wilderness to wander about in search of refreshing waters, going from mountain to hill, seeking rest, and finding none. Thus will he humble us, and bring us off from our self-dependence, before he enlarges our hearts again, and fills them with trust and peace. The peace of God in our souls is such a visitant as will not bear neglect, but exacts the purest and tenderest attentions. An evil or vain thought, or an idle word, is sufficient to disturb it. It is too evident that we cannot have spirituality of mind without a continual watch over ourselves, and a continual drawing from the fullness of grace in Christ.

5. In describing the enemies which the

Christian has to contend with, I dwelt much on those of "his own household," the unsubdued corruptions of his own heart, and I feel that I ought to be more particular in considering the duty and modes of combating these foes, even though it should be at the risk of some repetition.

The greater progress any one has made towards spiritual perfection, the more sensible he is of his great distance from it; *that he has not yet attained, neither is he already perfect.* But the way to become so, is to purify the heart, to be pure in those thoughts and motions which have no observers but God and ourselves. First, *make the tree good, and the fruit will also be good.* "Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life."

The care of the heart is one which will never be duly exercised, unless we have a taste for it, and a pervading impression of its importance. No duty is liable to be so much

neglected, because what passes in our hearts is concealed from the eye of our fellow-creatures, and seldom manifests itself till it has effected a great and unsuspected evil.

There is no time or condition in life in which we can safely omit the *keeping of the heart*. When we have a fullness of worldly bliss, when Providence sends afflictive dispensations, when provoked by the wrongs or neglects of our fellow-creatures, when we are engaged in worldly amusements, when any passion is excited, or the heart is set upon any one thing; then is the time when we should watch our heart with the most serious and tender solicitude. We have to do with a God “who searcheth the heart and trieth the reins of the children of men.”

When we are formal in worship and prayer, when the cares of business and the love of riches are engrossing the mind; then is the time to look about and see where these things will bring us up at last; and to take

home the description—"This people draw near to me with their mouths, and with their lips do they honour me, but their hearts are far from me." "They come before me as my people come, and sit before me as my people sit, and their hearts are far from me." An unkept heart starts back from God "like a deceitful bow." If, *when we would do good, evil is present with us*, evil will prevail, if it be not watched and resisted.

When we have good motions of the heart towards God, which we do not carry out into purpose, when we have kindlings of repentance for any evil we are doing, which go out and leave us still in the same evil practice; then we may be sure the heart is not kept, but left to take care of itself, and move on in its chosen way. More thought and more resolution would have produced a change, and turning from the evil we see, and doing the good we would, are forward steps of strength.

When our thoughts are wandering, like the

fool's eyes, to the ends of the earth, leaving us unsettled in our purposes, and unstable in our affections, so that our faith is as a reed shaken in the wind, and our love is as a dying breath ; we may be sure that the heart is not in our keeping, but has committed itself to the air, and is carried about as too light a thing to find rest.

When we prosper, and gain the desires of our heart, and are ready to say with David, "I shall never be moved," then is it clear that the heart has deceived us ; that its issues are not in correspondence with the Divine goodness ; that the fact that "every good gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights," has been forgotten. The soul has not been saying, "Bless the Lord, and forget not his benefits ;" let me love him for them, and let the incense of gratitude for them ascend as the fragrant odour of so many flowers planted by his own hand.

When afflictions come, and we murmur,

and our affections wither as plants in a parched soil ; then the heart has had its way till it has come to reason and feel as an unweaned child. “Afflictions do not arise out of the dust,” and if we see our corrupt nature taking fire at them, and an impatient spirit prevailing under them, as if we could know what is best for us, and could not trust the wisdom of God ; it is certain that our heart has not been kept “with all diligence,” but has been suffered to choose its own, and to have it, till every cross is treated as a wrong.

When we are seeking satisfaction in religion as an end, caring less for the glory of God than for our own safety ; when a regard to peace of conscience, or a reputation for consistency is the spring of our duty ; it shows the work of an *unkept heart*, and all our efforts of this kind will fail of their design. This is making the secondary objects of a religious life primary. A habit of doing well,

or of shunning evil, from *prudential* considerations, from a regard to reputation or worldly interest, is exceedingly dangerous to the soul.

When a person who acts from these principles, is detected in any wrong, he may be very sensitive, but it will be found that his trouble is what this person and that, or how this interest and that are to be affected by it, not how God has been offended, and a great evil grown up in his nature. An unwatched heart is very apt to run into a virtue of this sort, which is the worst form of selfishness, having indeed no less grossness, but a great deal more hypocrisy and deceit than is usual. It is an evidence we live more to opinion and reputation than to conscience, and that our grief is more for offending men and losing their approbation, than for any fault of ours. To act thus, under the pretence of religion, is to do heavenly things with earthly affections, and to seek not salvation in Christ, but the world.

We are creatures of imagination, and imaginary objects often influence us as realities. We have imaginary troubles. Our nerves reason for us, and make up our conclusions. It is a difficult process to separate the various workings of imagination from those of conscience and truth. Persons under the shadowy influence of this principle have an unquiet and unstable soul. It makes their life little more than a fitful dream. They are taken by appearances. The law of God is not so written by the Spirit in their hearts, that they can distinguish it from other laws of their own. It requires the greatest care of the heart, the greatest self-inspection, to know what law we obey, whether a law of our will and fancy, whether some impression of the fleshly imagery of our minds, or a law "converting the heart and enlightening the eyes." All false apprehensions wrong our souls, and wrong God, the author of truth and goodness.

In innumerable ways is the heart liable to lead us astray, as when we are uncharitable, when we speak unadvisedly, when we are taken with flattery, when we indulge pride or contempt, when we judge and act from prejudice, when we take liberty and pleasure in these, and a thousand such like things, which entangle us, and carry us so far in a spiritual decline as to put us out of conceit with better things, and in passion with the fruit of our own ways. A sound Christian will detect these beginnings of evil at the start, lest they take root and bear fruit.

To restrain and keep under such an enemy as the heart, which is wont to rise up in so many forms, and come out under the guise of tempers and dispositions not suspected as its work, cannot be done without the constant aid of the Divine Spirit, to enlighten us in all its turnings and windings; but a most dreadful consequence of neglecting to keep the heart is, that the Spirit will not abide in such

a heart, but leaves it to follow what is evil, and abuse what is good. The Spirit seeks a contrite heart, a prepared dwelling, and will never work alone, or work with us but when we are interested in his work, "minding the same things." He will enlighten the conscience, *trouble the waters*, but we must step into them before we are cured; he will "take of the things of Christ and show them unto us," but we must eat and drink thereof, before we can find healing. He would have us turn out the dealers in this world's goods from his temple, that no unholy thing may be done there. O; how much prayerfulness, watchfulness, earnestness and self-consideration must enter into the business of keeping the heart, if we would so keep it that our joy of hope and love *may be full*. It is a great thing to gain a knowledge of the heart, to be apprised of its deceitfulness, that we may keep a watch upon it, know what to expect from it, and head off its issues in any wrong direction.

There is one lesson of great practical importance, which a habit of watching our hearts will be sure to teach. It is a lesson, too, which we are ever slow to learn, and prone to forget as often as we learn it. It is this: that Christ came to "finish transgression and make an end of sin," and that this is done by the cleansing of his blood; and further, "that we are not sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; our sufficiency is of God." We must have a cleansing from Christ, and a strengthening from the fullness of power and grace in Him, before we can do any thing effectually in keeping the heart. We cannot feel too weak in ourselves, if it prompt us to lean on Him. We cannot fear too much, if it prompt us to fly to Him. Our own strength always prompts us to do useless things, but the strength of Christ things that are saving. It is only out of weakness that the spirit will ask help, and

such is the bounty of God in Christ that if we ask great things, he does not deal them out with a sparing hand, but is “ready to do for us exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think.”

CHAPTER IV.

ENCOURAGEMENTS FROM EXAMPLE—PROMISES
TO THE VICTORIOUS—REFLECTIONS.

THE Israelites, as the chosen people of God, had the promise of a rest, of a “land flowing with milk and honey,” and might have been conducted to it in a straight line; but they were commanded to go through the wilderness of Paran, and there wandered about for forty years. And so it is with Christians. They *look for a rest*, but they too are led through the wilderness. Thus every step they take, they need Divine direction, “a pillar of cloud by day, and a pillar of fire by night,” lest they should lose their way. They who know nothing of this spiritual warfare, know nothing of the Christian life. The

Saviour says, "In the world ye shall have tribulation, but in me ye shall have peace."

The greatest trials and conflicts of the people of Israel, were sent to correct their perverseness and unbelief, and this is the method of grace with all; "for whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth;" so that if we be without chastisement, then are we not sons. Our trials are sent as corrections; or they are sent to exercise our patience, and establish our hearts in waiting. In either case, had we been more patient, more humble, more obedient, more just, or had we loved the creature less, and been true and faithful in all things, they would have had no place. There are, therefore, no crosses, no trials, but should exercise our faith and hope. They are intended to subdue our wills, and bring them into subjection to the will of God,—and they will all afford in heaven, matter of thanksgiving, however they may prompt us now to say with Jacob,

“Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away ; all these things are against me.” So he thought, yet they proved all for him, and so will all trials which God sends as the pledges of his love. His dispensations which are most difficult to understand, are often found to turn to our good, even in this life. Many, after going through the deepest affliction, have been ready to say, “Before I was afflicted, I went astray.”

It is no small part of our spiritual conflict, to submit kindly to trials and crosses, and to derive that benefit from them, which makes them means and privileges of grace. We need great grace to carry us through the wilderness without murmuring, and keep us in meetness for the promised rest. We need to see always the divine glory, “as it shines in the face of Jesus Christ,” and to be changed “from glory to glory into the same image, as by the Spirit of the Lord.”

Nothing can reconcile us to painful dispen-

sations but an earnest of our interest in the favor of God, through the blood of atonement, and a consequent outgoing of love to Him, from the principle, that "they who are forgiven much, will love much." The Christian is one who knows, and is taught in all his experience, that "his iniquities separate between him and his God." He has no grief, no darkness, no doubts and fears, which do not teach this lesson. Every painful experience should therefore induce him to draw near to God, by repentance and faith. Till he does this, he finds no rest, and is ready to say, with Job, "Behold, I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him: on the left hand, where he doth work, but I cannot behold him; he hideth on the right hand, that I cannot see him. But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold." "O that I knew where I might find him." He has now turned "his eyes from beholding

vanity," and he sees no greatness in the bulk of this world, and no glare in its beauty.

St. Paul says, "I know in whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him." These words express the convictions he had derived from experience. His faith was now stronger than when he first believed. He had gone through affliction and toil, in the service of his Redeemer, and had received from him so much support and consolation, that he could never doubt him more. He had put him to the proof, and though he had committed his all to him, he felt it was safe. So it is with all true believers. The trial of their faith is precious; it gains strength from difficulty, and becomes *assured* in victory. The afflictive dispensations of Providence, and every form of opposition from the foes of the spirit, are trials of the Christian's faith, and under grace, are intended to work for his good; so that, if he misimproves them, or

turns them to ill account, they will bring him into still greater trouble. God will say to us, as to his people of old: "They would not hearken to my voice, and Israel would none of me. So I gave them up to their own heart's lusts, and they walked in their own counsels. I would have purged them, and they were not purged; therefore they shall not be purged from their filthiness any more, till I have caused my fury to rest upon them." If trials make us more complaining, more remiss in duty, less fervent in devotion, than before, they will be sure to bring on us some severer correction. "You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore will I punish you for your iniquities." If his children forsake his law, and disregard his reproofs, then will God "visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquities with stripes."

This view of our trials, and of the end and fruit they should work in us, shows that we

must ever be steadfast in the faith of Christ, if we would have peace. God tells his people, that if they had cleaved unto him and his way, “their peace should have been as a river, and their righteousness as the waves of the sea.” We must have firmness of trust in Christ, lest when temptations come, it be said of us, “From that time they went back, and walked no more with Him.”

There are no trials, no crosses so great, or so inscrutable in their purpose but faith may work good out of them. Even death, which is the last onset of our enemy, faith in Christ enables us to meet with composure or triumph. “I have fought a good fight ; I have kept the faith, and finished my course with joy.” Other foundation no man can lay ; but the house founded upon this rock shall stand it out against all storms. Let us, then, be jealous of our hearts ; for “he that trusteth his own heart is a fool ;” especially if it be a heart that worketh by unbelief, “in departing from the

living God." Let us keep an eye on Christ, as the store-house of our supplies of grace and strength; for "out of his fulness" we receive, and "grace for grace." Eye him while about the great work of his mission, and see how "he set his face like a flint" against all obstacles that lay in his way. Eye him as "the Captain of salvation," to fight our battles against sin and Satan; for he has "spoiled principalities and powers," and if ever we overcome, we must have the victory through faith in him. Eye him in all dark, difficult and painful experiences; for he was perfected through suffering, and is "touched with a feeling of our infirmity." Eye him as a pattern, endeavouring to imitate him, and running our course, "looking unto him, as the author and finisher of our faith." By considerations of this nature, we are prepared to give our faith a trial which is "more precious than that of gold," losing in it all the dross of

our nature, and gaining strength to stand against the onsets of every foe.

As a further comfort in all trials of your faith, consider the end of it, which is the salvation of your souls. O what is the meaning of this? "What shall a man profit if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" Even if the moth and rust did not corrupt the riches of this world, yet the world itself must pass away; but "the ransomed of the Lord shall then have songs and everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." Men are apt to think their wisdom and greatness lie in gratifying themselves, in advancing their fortunes in the world, but wait a little, and you shall see their end; you shall see that true wisdom and greatness lie in a contempt of these things, contrasted with things which are adapted to the soul and its heavenly nature. "He that loveth silver,

shall not be satisfied with silver ;” in the midst of sufficiency he is in wants, and on leaving the world he “can carry nothing out of it.” But the believer enters upon his inheritance at the very moment when the worldling is spoiled of his ; he is admitted to the presence of God, which is “fulness of joy,” and sits down “at his right hand, where are pleasures for evermore.” Keep in mind then, the “end of your faith ;” have “respect unto the recompense of reward ;” look more to “the glory that shall be revealed,” that you may find it easier to “turn your eyes from beholding vanity.”

Considerations of this kind show what a great evil sin is. God governs the world to keep it under. Sin hath entered the world, and death by sin ; so that our life is but a dying process. “Death has passed upon all men, because all have sinned.” Hence, unless sin be pardoned and done away in Christ, there must be “indignation and wrath, tribu-

lation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil." Pause over the subject, and see where lies the root of all your troubles. Whether it be sin in your own heart or in that of others which does the mischief, it is from the same bitter root, and should be turned to some good account in subduing its power within us. The great concern of our existence is "to die unto sin and live unto righteousness." It implies a constant acting in the same direction, and the gathering of fresh strength so to act from step to step. So that if we fall out by the way, we must be brought back by correction, and our wounds must be healed by stripes, and still there will be a loss of time and power. We must start right again, but that is at the point we left in departing from the right way, or it may be far back of it. Such is the force of habit in well or evil doing. If we resist doing well once, we shall have less difficulty in resisting the second time, less than that the third time, and

so on, by lessening degrees, till we come to do evil without the constraint of a better principle. If we indulge once a known sin, we shall be more easily overcome by the second temptation, more easily by the third, and so on, till a habit of indulgence is formed. If we neglect a known duty, the first omission will trouble us more than the second, and the second more than the third, and so on, till we have no trouble about it. So in well doing, what we have done once, we do more easily a second time, more easily still the third time, and so on, till a habit is formed. This principle will apply to our most secret duties, to our reading and meditation of God's word, to prayer and self-examination, and to all the forms of self-denial. The practice of these duties will make our practice perfect in them. Thus do we cease to do evil in learning to do well. Thus, whether doing well or ill, is it manifest that "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." This is a view of

our mental and moral economy, which shows that there can be, safely, no sleeping in the Christian life ; that “ the loins of our minds ” should be always girded up, “ our lamps trimmed and burning,” and our faces bound heaven-ward.

This will not be a hard saying, if we have experienced the bitterness of sin and the sweetness of pardon in Christ. If our eyes have been really opened, we know that we were born blind, and that now we see, and blessed are we ; “ for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto us, but the Father which is in heaven.” There is a loveliness and certainty in religious affections when they spring from the seed of truth. It cannot be otherwise. They spring from, and centre on objects which are of a nature to change the whole man, and cause all his heart-interest to take a heavenward direction. Greater, therefore, is our guilt if we become careless and let any other objects take possession of

our hearts ; and doing so, it is all the more certain that with the *leanness* that comes into our hearts, there will come sorrow and trouble. If we will not know God in prosperity, He will make us know him *in adversity*. He will thus revive the recollection of what we have lost, and sweeten and endear the taste of it by the experience of bitter contrasts. Thus He teaches us not only the deceitfulness of things, but the deceitfulness of our hearts in the use of them, so that the more we know them and ourselves, the less shall we trust either, and the more we know spiritual things, the more incomparable they shall appear as being the only objects that can be safely loved and trusted. The best fruits of other objects are justly titled as false comforts, and the more we rely on them as supports, the greater will be our fall. The soul is so tender that no earthly thing can touch it without leaving a taint, and God, who has a jealous eye on it, will keep it from idols. He will try it by

fire, that its rust-gathering from earth-damps may no more appear, and that it may be fitted as a jewel to be worn in the crown of his Son.

I have dwelt thus on the methods of God's dealing with his people, that we may not forget that we are to be conducted by the same measures to our reward. Consider the victories of those who have gone before us. How many they are, and though gained in much painfulness and agony of conflict, and through many temptations, fears, tears and prayers, they have been for these very reasons the more perfect and glorious. Look along the whole line of patriarchs and prophets, of apostles and martyrs. What strength of faith and heart do we see in them? See them overcoming all things at last, and departing to the welcome—"Well done, good and faithful servants; enter into the joy of your Lord." Since their day, how many, like them, have also fought the "good fight," "finished their

course," and followed on to the "recompense of reward!" And we are going by the same way, and although we have many victories to gain, yet are we not finding true in our experience "the things" we have heard of those who have gone before us? While we see it written of some that "they overcame," that they "finished their course with joy," how true is this as a prediction, that many more shall do it—that the devil, resisted, shall flee—that "greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world?" Yes, all who have fought *the good fight*, and were entitled to exclaim, as the battle ended—"Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ," have in dying conquered, and in conquering given testimony to you that "be of good courage," and "hope in the Lord," that "he shall strengthen your heart"—and to you who "raise revenge" against your own sins, and crucify yourselves,

that you shall be delivered from "the body of this death."

Let us follow these holy forerunners as they followed Christ. What do they now think of the sufferings, persecutions, and labours of their course here, which ended in the victory they now celebrate and enjoy? And what shall we think of our "lighter afflictions," when we are sharing the spoils of a triumph like theirs? They think of the sacrifices and sorrows of their conflict as not worthy to be compared with the glory that is revealed in them, yea, they glory in them as a part of their *fellowship in the sufferings of Christ*, as mementos of having done and suffered something on their way to so much that is altogether undeserved. But how little have we to endure in comparison of them, and how much sweetness too, might we now find in it, if we had more of their spirit? Had we a royal crown to lay aside, and the wealth of

whole empires at our disposal, and should we renounce all, and wear out our days in want and servitude for such a recompense, the sacrifice would be as a ray of light to the sun ; its value and conspicuity would be lost in the pervading presence of that glory in which all other glories are swallowed up.

Consider further, how these holy men trusted and loved the word of the Lord, and leaned upon his arm. They saw wonderful things in his law and in his providence, and the knowledge they had of him did but make them desire more, as Moses did, when he prayed, "show me thy glory." It was this which kept down their unbelief, pride, carnality, and whatsoever might separate between their soul and God. They contended earnestly for the truth delivered to the saints. It was their life, it was the power of God in them ; it was their wisdom, their sanctification, and their redemption. And so it should be with us. We should take the word of God

as “the man of our counsel;” we should keep in the “light of his countenance” as it shines out of his word, his works and his providence, and above all, “as it shines in the face of Jesus Christ.” God in Christ is a God with us, on our side, and taking part against all our foes. He is a God of sympathy and consolation in sorrow, a God of bounty in want, a God of strength in weakness. He is a pitying, pardoning and prayer-hearing God, inviting and answering our petitions. He is our God, a Father in our spiritual orphanage, adopting, loving, and teaching us to say, “Our Father which art in heaven.” It is thus that believers are *brought nigh to God in Christ*. They have a nearness to him which enables them to draw all things from his fullness. And why should they despond, why complain, why be in want, why be doubting and fearing? “The name of the Lord is a strong tower, and the righteous runneth into it, and is safe.” Thus they who,

when prospering, enjoy God in all things, may, when things take a different turn, enjoy all in Him. “Unto the upright there ariseth light out of darkness.” “Though the fig-tree doth not blossom, and there be no fruit in the vine, though the labour of the olive doth fail, and the fields yield no meat,” yet the Lord, by “lifting up the light of his countenance upon them,” puts joy into their hearts, more than when corn, and wine, and oil increased.

As the signs in the heavens, the sea and the waves roaring, were to betoken the coming of the Lord for destruction, so when troubles are sanctified, when your gracious affections are ripened as by fire, “Know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand;” “that now is the time to wake out of sleep, for now is your salvation nearer than when ye believed.” Nothing can be more encouraging to the Christian, than to look back to trials improved, and forward to them as pledges of adopting love. There is no such sweetness

tasted in life, as that we gather from the healing of a troubled spirit ; no such strength as that which we bring out of victory ; no such love as that which cries out of all pressures, “ though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.” Love does not know its power, and dares not trust itself, till it has overcome resistance and outlived crosses. Faith does not know its power, and will not undertake great things, till it can look back to obstacles overcome, and trials gone through and vanquished. Who will not *glory in tribulations*, if while they *abound*, his *consolations* in God do *much more abound* ? Who will not *take joyfully* all crosses, if they do but exercise his virtues and give him strength to bear them as *very little things* ? Who will not then say, in view of these *lighter afflictions*,—“ My soul, wait thee only on God, for my expectation is from him.” “ God is my strength ; he maketh my feet like hinds’ feet ; he will make me to walk upon high places.”

I would not omit a word for those who are drinking deep of the cup of affliction, and see not its bottom or design. Think of those holy men of old, “of whom the world was not worthy,” and who yet “wandered about in sheep skins and in goat skins, being destitute, afflicted, and tormented.” Yours may be a hardness of lot, which enriches the soul, by “working out for you a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.” Live upon those promises which have been to a thousand saints, now in glory, a staff and a song. They are recorded for you as promises that never failed, that have been lived in and lived from. They stand still and are open as “wells of salvation,” at which our fathers drank as they journeyed through the *wilderness* to their rest. “Cast all your care upon God,” and he will surprise you with relief in your greatest extremities, and ere long make you to be “like a watered garden, even like a spring whose waters fail not.” “The Lord God is a sun

and a shield ; the Lord will give græe and glory, and no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.”

Consider also, that it is God’s purpose in taking away all your trusts, to bring you to trust in him, and that the less we know and trust any thing out of him, the better it will be for us in the end. He beats us out of all other comforts, not that we may remain destitute, but that we may go to him for better supplies ; for something to ‘rely on when all things else fail. He would give us a sanctified sense of all our troubles, by driving us first out of all trust in creatures, and then drawing us near to him to partake of his fulness. As the dove that was sent out of the ark could find no rest for its foot till it returned, so when we have let go our hold on God, and taken hold on the creature, He will not let us find rest, till we remember the abundance that is in our father’s house, and return home again. It is a deep spiritual judgment, to find a

satisfying rest in creatures, such as God never visits on his children ; their souls have been touched by his Spirit, and drawn by his love and they will never be quiet, but will tremble like needles, till they are in a line with the sweet attraction which has been given them. Say then, “ Return unto thy rest, O my soul. Why art thou so cast down, O my soul ? and why art thou disquieted within me ? hope thou in God ; for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance.”

It is a remarkable fact, that affliction marks the experience of all the saints who have been inspired to give testimony for God. And it is no less remarkable in their record, that their love, trust, and joy in the Lord seem to have been perfected through trial and suffering. We see this in all their songs and triumphs. One moment they cry out in their distress at the swelling of the floods, and the next the angry billows are quieted, and the spirit is calling on all creatures to praise the Lord.

This is a distinguishing feature of their experience. Afflictions were fires of heaven, by which their hearts were purified. Everywhere we see their triumphs and praises, their expressions of faith and love, connected with foregoing sorrows, and springing out of them as birds let loose from their cage, and delighting to wing the heavens and fill them with songs. And when we look into our own experience, we shall find that we never have had such impressions of the Divine goodness, such strength of faith, such "joy in the Lord," as when he has embittered our enjoyment in creatures, blasted our hopes in them, and shut us up to seek help and consolation in him alone. If we have no such experiences, we ought to fear that he has not been dealing with us as with his children. Never does the "peace of God rule in our hearts," or "the word of Christ dwell in us richly," disposing us "to teach and admonish one another in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, sing-

ing with grace in our hearts to the Lord," as when, humbled, and broken in heart, and wounded in every creature affection, we begin to taste the restored joys of salvation through the pardoning and satisfying love of God in Christ. Then "greater is he that is in us, than he that is in the world." Then Christ is in us, and the world is out of us; yea, we are out of ourselves; we are in Christ, "He in us and we in Him." We are "one;" one in love, one in purpose, one in the "fight of faith," and to be one forever in glory. Here is the Christian's seat of power; here is the rock smitten in the wilderness whose waters follow him for his refreshing; here is "the stone which the builders refused," and it has become the wall of his defence; it is the "stone cut out without hands," which shall put down all his enemies; it is Christ dwelling in his heart by the Spirit of his grace. He is in him in his offices; as he is a prophet to take away his darkness; a priest to take away

his guilt; and a king to take away sin and subdue the foes of his spirit. He is in him in his righteousness, as having fulfilled the law and satisfied the justice of God for him. He is in him by his Spirit, as a sanctifier, intercessor, and comforter. And as the believer has "received Christ Jesus the Lord, so should he walk in him," and take part with him in his merit and grace, in his promises and comforts, in his gospel and ordinances, in his cross and reproach, in his crown and glory. In all these things, and more, in every thing to be done and enjoyed, he is Christ's, and Christ is his. So that the Christian may well say in all troubles, though "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith on the Son of God." Herein we see not only that "he that hath not the Son, hath not life," but that "He came not to be ministered unto, but to minister."

All who are now in glory, “washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” He has all power, and he will not disappoint the hope of them who trust in him, yea, he hath said, “Whosoever believeth in me, hath everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day.” O, believers, let your wisdom appear in knowing what a prize you have in your hands! You were once darkness but now are you light in the Lord, and should walk as children of light. You were once condemned, but there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. You were once afar off, but now are you brought nigh by the blood of the cross. You were once poor, but through the poverty of Christ you have become rich. He is yours, and you shall never want. Use him in all your duties. Be ever “looking unto Him.” Prayer is a duty ; do it in his name. Gratitude is a duty ; see how He first loved you. Submission is a duty ; learn it from his example. Self-denial

is a duty ; see how he denied himself for you. Holy meditation is a duty ; let him enrich and enliven, sanctify and sweeten it.

He is also “ a very present help in trouble.” He is the consolation, the refuge, the cleansing, the strength, the life and food of his people. We can desire nothing more than he is, and it will be a heaven indeed, to be associated with those who cast their crowns at his feet, and ascribe salvation to his blood. And if any thing can make heaven sweeter than heaven may be to us, it will be the memory of our patient carrying of his cross here—the memory of our being willing to die for Him who had died for us, and brought us to such glory.

2. We read of those who, when temptations come, *fall away*, of those who have no root in them and run well only for a season, of those who, when troubles and persecutions came, “ went back and followed no more with Him ;” and accordingly our blessed Sa-

viour has given us many promises, which imply not only that we must have conflict and trial in our course, but that we must “come off conquerors through Him,” or fail and perish without reward. Let us look, then, not only to the “example of patient suffering” in those who have gone before us, but to the encouraging words of Him who hath *called us to be saints*. “To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life which is in the midst of the paradise of God.” “To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a name written.” “He that overcometh shall be clothed in white raiment, and I will not blot his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels.” “Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out, and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the

city of my God.” What blessedness and certainty crowd into these promises, making them overflow with a divine fulness. “He that overcometh will I grant to sit with me on my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father on his throne.” “He that overcometh shall inherit all things, and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.” No more can be said, and all is said to the victorious. Trials in the way to such an inheritance, bought with blood, and bought for the unworthy, may well be expected, and regarded as not *worthy to be named*.

3. In the course I have thus far pursued, I have touched upon a great variety of subjects, defining and applying many of them as we went along, and yet coming out as did the circuitous route of the Israelites in the wilderness, at the point from which we started. Thus with us, as with them, it is not so much progress that we have gained, as trial and conviction.

It is but reasonable that some convictions should have been produced, and among others this—that it is a great thing to be a Christian by living as one should. If we consider what he has to do, what he is called to, and *what a price is in his hand to get wisdom*, and yet what he does, what he aspires to, and what use he makes of the “grace given unto him,” it forces on us the questions, “Lord, are there few that be saved?” “When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?” Of how many can it be said, at the end of their course, “they have been faithful over a few things?”

Again, the great blessedness of being *decidedly* religious has been seen. If we fight, or trust, or love “as uncertainly,” no year, or perhaps week, or even day of life will pass without leaving the marks of some enemy’s advantage over us. We have become conformed to the world—we are found seeking “our own things, and not the things of

Christ," our tempers have lost their patience and sweetness, or there is no lighting up of joy and praise in the countenance, or we may go mourning all the day long, something will tell the tale. Nor does this alone show the advantage of being decidedly religious. There is strength in decision. Decision passes the line, where the affections are liable to fall back or stop on objects by the way, and beyond which, we gain such a taste for divine things, and such visions of the "glory to be revealed," as hasten us on to the end of our race. Be the Lord's altogether, and then will he be all thy desire; his glory will be "thy rere-ward;" he will "make fat thy bones, and thou shalt be like a watered garden," where flowers and blossoms shall come forth, and there is the continual singing of birds.

We have seen, too, that Christ is *all our salvation*. He is not only so as having satisfied the law for us, and "made all things now ready," not only so as being the "only

name under heaven given among men whereby we can be saved," but he is so as an example for us to follow, as a pattern of our life in the flesh, and as supplying all our wants out of his fulness, going before us, and clearing the way for us to fight and conquer. Out of him there is no light in ordinances, no comfort in promises, no strength in resolutions, no hearing of our prayers, and no peace with God. O, then, let us cultivate such enlarged views of the freeness, fulness and greatness of the mercy of God in Christ, as that we may "come boldly to a throne of grace," knowing that his pardons as much abound in Christ as our sins abound out of him! David says, "He is the salvation of my countenance," and so he will be of ours, if we first make him the salvation of our hearts. When the heart is cheered with it, it will make the face shine with the gladness and purity thereof, writing, as it were, "his name on our foreheads."

We have seen that the "fight of faith" is one which cannot be successfully carried on without careful study of ourselves and of God's word. The Christian must have knowledge of both these, and abound in it. He must get understanding, and hate false ways as the result of it. Unless we think to high and holy purpose, we shall not feel and act to any such purpose. Unless we "know whom we have believed," we shall never "be strong in the Lord." It is only when we know what we believe, that belief takes strong steps in practice. Our souls may have a thousand ills and we know it not, or knowing it, may not know their remedy and its uses. A flourishing Christian must ever be a thinking and knowing one. He must be wiser as well as greater than "he that is in the world." He must outwit the wiles of Satan and of his own heart, that he may never be crippled by a first blow. Having done all, he must

stand, stand with rallied strength. This is his fit expression and posture in the world.

We have seen not only that afflictions belong to the Christian's earthly inheritance, and often constitute no small part of the trial of his faith, but that how grievous soever they are, they are to "yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby." Have they had this effect in our experience? Have we been healed by the stripes we have received? Have they quickened us in well doing? Have they corrected our false estimates of the world? These are marks of true discipleship. They are all fruits of faithful soldiership. They all show that we are following on, after the example of others, "to know the Lord."

We have seen that our warfare is one which calls for all our resources of strength and encouragement. If then it gives us no trouble to be religious, it is not because sin is dead, danger past, and nothing to be done but to

be received to heaven. It is more probable that ours is the quietness of self-deception—a peace with sin, Satan, and ourselves; not the quietness of spiritual safety, not the peace with God which is through our Lord Jesus Christ. Our life is as the stemming of an opposing current, which is ever bearing us along with it when our resistance ceases. In our best estate we may take to ourselves the warning of the angels to Lot.—“Arise, flee for your life, look not behind.” Satan opposes, the world allures and invites to rest, and corruptions cleave to us which we cannot throw off, but over which we must gain the mastery, “striving against sin.” If we are at ease, and refuse to “think on these things,” it shows that the enemy has made unseen approaches, and gained unknown advantages over us. Have we then evidence that we are Christians *in this fact*, that we are engaged in this warfare? Have we “taken to ourselves the whole armour of God?” Are we conducting the

“fight of faith” daily in the “strength of God,” and gaining victories over the enemies of our souls? Are we self-denying, wise, effective and consecrated soldiers of the cross? Are we using every help imparted to us by the grace of God, with faith, prayer, and patience, with godly fear, and a steady “looking unto Christ,” who has conquered, and will “give us the victory,” if we are “faithful unto death!” If we are doing less than this, we have no promise of peace; we are not contending for the prize of life, and of course shall not attain to it. But if we neglect none of the preparations and helps which we have been considering; if we are engaged in the “fight,” and desire nothing so much as strength to go on and conquer ourselves, “the world, the flesh, and the devil;” if our minds are *determined*, and hearts *prepared* to fight and die, rather than not conquer; then may we “be of good courage.” To such soldiers, “the Captain of our salvation” says: Move

fearlessly on ; look not to the right hand, nor to the left, but keep your eyes fixed on me. I know your weakness, your fears, your spiritual enemies. I know too, your holy resolutions, your fervent prayers, and I will help your performance of the former, and give a rich answer to the latter. I see my name written upon you, and yours written in “ the book of life,” and you have my word pledged that “ you shall never perish.” Be not afraid ; the conflict may be sharp, but at longest, it will be short. The day of deliverance is near ; redemption is at hand. Soon the last onset of sin, the tempter, and of death itself, shall be met, broken, and turned back, to rally no more.

And now seeing that those “ who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake—and they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars, for ever and ever ;

let us not *be slothful*, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit *these* promises." Let us think much of the blessed army who have fought and conquered under the banner of the Prince of life. They are gathered into eternity, and to them is fast gathering out of time all that is good and lovely. Behold the virtues and the graces of their leader copied out in their lives. As He now is, so are they, glorious in holiness, and reflecting the very beauty of Christ as so many likenesses of him, drawn by the Eternal Spirit. These are sons and daughters, whom he has rescued by his power from the kingdom of darkness. He guarded them from the rage of their adversaries in earth and hell, and brought them through the troubled waters of life, to 'behold his glory.' And if we are faithful to the end, He will welcome us to join them, saying, "Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you

from the foundation of the world.” ‘Blessed is the man whose trust is in the Lord!’ ‘Thou, Lord, art my portion; I will make haste, and delay not to keep thy commandments. Thy statutes will I make my songs in the house of my pilgrimage.’

THE END.









